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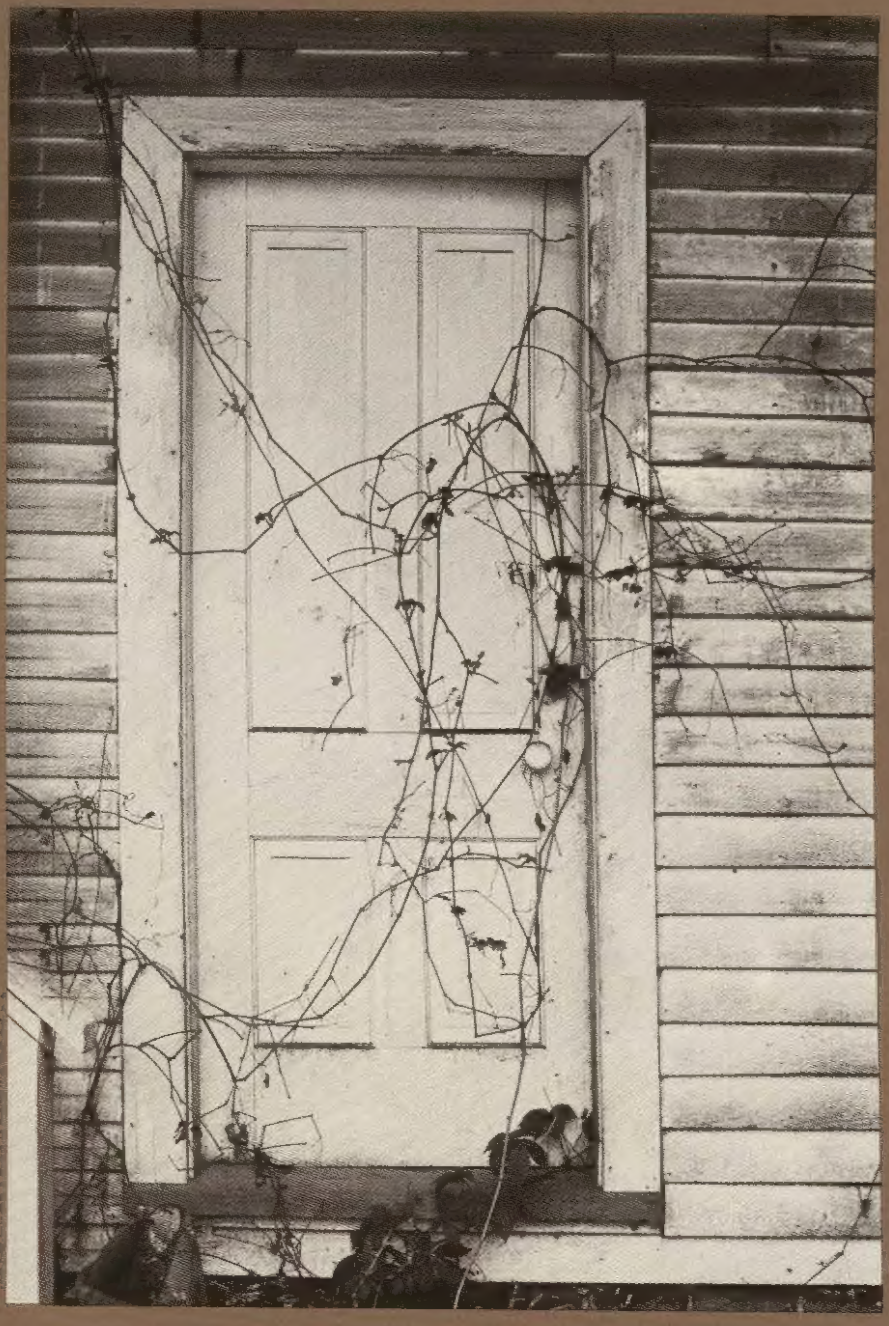

Sense of Place in Appalachia

Interviews with Wilma Dykeman & Lee Smith

Stories, Essays, Poetry, Photos, Reviews

and a Special Section of Maps—Jo Carson Traces Her Routes

$3.50

Kenneth Murray

Homeward

entering west virginia
the pavement shatters
and a whole family
leaving
hitches
along the highway;
mother, father,
a daughter in arms;
I pass a road sign
indiscernible
by shotgun,
so it seems,
forever in america,
home is in
the desperate going

—Joseph Barrett

Photographs on the front and back cover by Alice Anthony, Johnson City, Tenn.

Joseph Barrett's work has appeared in ***Southern Humanities Review, Poetry Kants*** *and* ***Rolling Stone.*** *He is a native West Virginian who lives in Lexington, Ky.*

Volume 6, Number 2
Summer, 1989

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Now and Then Magazine

Now and Then has been published three times a year since 1984 by the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services (CASS) at East Tennessee State University. CASS is one of the State of Tennessee's Centers of Excellence, supporting artistic, scholarly and public service projects in the region. When you become a Friend of CASS ($9.00 per year, $12 for institutions and libraries) you will receive a subscription to *Now and Then*.

Submissions of poetry, fiction, articles, personal essays, graphics and photographs

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Kenneth Murray

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Submissions of poetry, fiction, articles, personal essays, graphics and photographs concerned with Appalachian life past and present are welcomed if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

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Thanks for special help on this issue Ed Cabbell, Bob Henry Baber and Blair White.

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From the Editor

After I moved away from Huntington, W.Va., where I lived for four years, I missed it badly for a long time. When I got over that, I still felt unreasonably nostalgic about my years in that part of the country. Friends, even West Virginians, didn't understand my attachment. I didn't understand it myself. Huntington wasn't that lovable. It was old and crumbling, in the throes of permanent recession.

But I loved it because of Ritter Park with its creek, large trees and well-kept rose gardens, for a fine YMCA, for its old fashioned downtown movie theaters, for the little grills and the peanut shop, for the big muddy Ohio River, a highway of barges, for some earthy, politically-minded women who became my friends.

But for the six years I have lived in Johnson City, I never had occasion to return to Huntington—until this May. My husband, Steve Giles, and I spent a week traveling around West Virginia to interview Vietnam veterans for a book on Appalachian veterans we're doing with Bert Allen of Milligan College. (This trip was thanks to a grant from Berea College's Appalachian Center, by the way.)

Going back to West Virginia was for me like rereading a book. In the book some of the plot, characters and interesting items stand out in memory clearly, but each page brings forgotten details back. The peanut shop downtown had the same peanut wallpaper. We ate breakfast in Thabit's and were served by the same shy woman that used to serve us lunch there. Connie Carr, a social worker at the Vet Center, told us the same sort of amazing stories about her work that she used to tell. Huntington hadn't changed much.

It's not like Johnson City. Six years away from this place, and an old resident would probably get lost on all the new roads and among the new buildings. This is part of the Sun Belt or the New South.

Huntington hasn't changed because there's a stagnant economy in that part of West Virginia—a portion of the Rust Belt. One of our interviewees said that Huntington was the grimmest city he'd ever seen. I didn't feel that way about it, but I could see that the place was not faring well. More businesses had closed. We saw no new construction. And where were the barges that used to run constantly up and down the Ohio River? There was a pleasant new riverside park, but over on the other side of town, the lovely Ritter Park had grown shabbier, in the classic rose garden there were weeds. There had never been weeds there before.

We traveled on to Charleston, Fairmont, Snowshoe and Lewisburg. The trip made me recall how different my notions of what made up Appalachia had been when I lived in West Virginia than they had become living in East Tennessee. My "sense of place" had changed.

There was more variety in the region than I remembered. We drove up through Eastern Kentucky with its steep mountains, narrow valleys and coal mining economy to Huntington, a city of brick houses with something of a Midwestern feel to it. The hills in that part of the state are as dense as Eastern Kentucky, but not that steep. In the eastern part of the West Virginia with its higher, grander mountains we finally saw new construction and a carefully nurtured tourist industry.

The scenery, the economy and even the kinds of people in each of the places we visited in West Virginia were completely distinctive from each other and different from East Tennessee with its taller mountains, wider valleys and somewhat more Southern sensibility. Not that one could mistake any of these places for any place but Appalachia. They have in common hills of one sort or another, lush greenery, hazy skies, fragrant honeysuckle. But I was struck by the diversity of the places we visited more than the similarities.

I came back to East Tennessee to prepare for this "sense of place" issue of *Now and Then* with the feeling that any attempt to present an all-encompassing view of the region, a sense of place for all of Appalachia at once, was impossible. If there were collective truths to be had about the region, we would have to find them through singular experiences. And the mail did bring highly individual visions.

Two remarkable essays offer intensely personal senses of place. The experiences described by Amy Tipton Gray and by Pauline Cheek are very different from each other, but both end up being chronicles of how these women came to define themselves as Appalachian, how both came to the discovery of its uniqueness, how both were scarred by hearing the negative view of their culture, how both came to a sense of pride in it and embraced it.

Our poetry editor Jo Carson made us maps showing her personal sense of place, finding her routes. Her important landmarks show the way to her home—but they would not help you much finding the way to her house. We also have the latest of Jo's "People Pieces" (below) and a review of her newly-published book, *Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet*.

When Sandy Ballard and I interviewed Wilma Dykeman and Lee Smith respectively, we learned about very different elements of each of the authors' senses of place. Though as journalists we try not to impose our own personalities in articles, we found that the questions we asked showed something about our own sense of place because we asked about the items that were preoccupying each of us.

In the past few issues the themes have restricted us a bit, and we haven't been able to include as much fiction and poetry as we would have liked, but "sense of place" is a theme that doesn't demand one kind of subject matter, it demands a clear idea of a piece of ground, a time in history. That is the strong suit of the writers in this region. The three stories and 11 poems represent the widest diversity imaginable, with settings ranging from the coal camps of the 1920s to a neighborhood in Pittsburgh.

We were pleased with the response by writers to this theme, and excited by the original thought and high quality of work that came in. We hope you will enjoy this celebration of the varying landscapes of Appalachia.

—Pat Arnow

Honey, you drive
two weeks to yesterday out 58
turn up the creek at Richmond's
Bend,
turn down two miles in at the fork,
turn left at the blue and
black Buick,
and come to the end of the road.
12 miles from where you're sitting.
Step on it
and we'll wait dinner for you.

—Jo Carson

Jo Carson's "People Pieces" have just come out in a book, ***Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet,*** *which is reviewed on page 37.*

From the Director

With this issue of *Now And Then* , the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University marks the completion of its first year as an Accomplished Center of Excellence. Established in 1984 through Tennessee's Comprehensive Educational Reform Act, CASS was one of 14 original Centers of Excellence. In 1987 the Center was one of five to receive a merit award from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the State Board of Regents for outstanding performance. Last year, independent evaluators concurred that CASS had succeeded in achieving the goals and objectives set forth in its five-year plan. Over the past five years we have developed research resources in Appalachian Studies, supported scholarly, artistic and public service projects focusing on regional themes and concerns and continued the development of courses, conferences and symposia dealing with facets of Appalachian social and cultural history. These programs emphasize the rich heritage of folk traditions and vital contemporary literature that are equally part of the expressive culture of this complex and diverse part of the world.

Contrary to the expectations of rationalists and logical positivists, the growth of science, industry and bureaucracy have not led to the eradication of distinctive ethnic and regional cultures here in the Southern mountains of the United States or elsewhere. Instead of "cultural grey-out" and social uniformity, we observe traditionalist enclaves and separatist movements arising to oppose the hegemony of capitalist and socialist systems alike. Tendencies toward standardization and homogenization which appear to be inherent in the corporate structure of modern societies also seem to generate countervalent forces leading to the reassertion of ethnic, national and regional identity and autonomy. A common pattern underlying these movements is the partial assimilation of marginal individuals and groups into more inclusive social orders, development of a sense of ambiguous identity, followed by the selective reinterpretation of a previously stigmatizing culture, often culminating in symbolic or actual return to an idealized primordial community and homeplace.

The key themes of Appalachian regional scholarship and literature—migration and homecoming, disassociation and reaffiliation, denial and affirmation—have their counterparts throughout the modern world. The writers whose intuitions and insights grace the pages of this latest edition of *Now And Then* have resolved the dilemma of biculturalism, demonstrating that it is possible to identify with a particular place and its people and still touch upon universal themes and concerns. By selectively carrying forward the best of the past into the present, they hold forth the possibility of richer and more varied cultural lives for the rest of us.

Over the next five years CASS hopes to contribute to a fuller appreciation of traditional and contemporary culture in Appalachia. To do this, we need the continued support of people like yourself who appreciate our accomplishments and aspirations. You can help by becoming a Friend of CASS. Individual subscriptions are $9.00 for three issues per year. Institutional and library subscriptions are $12.00. Larger contributions and gifts will help to continue the work of the CASS Fellowship Program. For further information concerning our activities, write to CASS, Box 19180A, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tenn. 37614-0002 or call (615) 929-5348. We've come a long way in a short time, but we need your support today more than ever. Help us keep growing.

— Richard Blaustein

From the Museum

Northeast Tennessee was selected as a host site for two different groups of visitors from the Soviet Union this spring. The first delegation, which included a teacher, a photographer, a citizen diplomat and an accountant, toured East Tennessee State University, which was presenting its International Week at that time. The Reece Museum hosted the group for an evening reception and an informal chat.

The second delegation, comprised of 29 residents of Tbilisi, Georgia, USSR, arrived the following week. The group included actors, visual artists and musicians ranging in age from 13 to 44. Heading the delegation was the Chairman of the Tbilisi Peace Committee.

During the visit, the Reece hosted an afternoon reception at which one of our patrons approached me with the question, "How do I recognize the Russian visitors?" I could not answer. It was not until I actually spoke with a Soviet individual that I knew whether he or she was a Soviet visitor or a local resident whom I did not know.

This question of how to recognize the Russian visitors caused me to reflect on the differences between our two nationalities.

Probably one of the things that stood out most to me was that several of the Russians could speak English to some degree. We Americans could not converse with those who spoke no English unless an interpreter was nearby. They knew more about the history of our country than I knew about theirs, and they were excited that they are now being given the freedom to learn about their own history.

There were few differences other than language. They discussed their region with pride just as I did mine. And those with whom I spoke were as concerned as I about global problems.

The visitors expressed gratitude for the friendly reception they had received in Johnson City. They complimented the scenery here and wanted to correspond with us after they returned home. A member of the first delegation asked me if we might exchange art exhibits.

I am beginning to believe that we will have peace, perhaps not by design, but through necessity. Some of the problems we face, such as those that threaten the human environment, are global and will be solved only through the cooperation of every nation. The visitors from the Soviet Union with whom I spoke are aware of this. We will tear down our fences and speak with each other about these issues and work together to solve our problems, certainly for the sake of peace, but more than this perhaps, for the sake of survival. If we think of each other as people instead of as governments, we can realize that we are not really all that different.

—Helen Roseberry

From the Archives

Hill Station, Va.

Life in Appalachia is not just coal mining, subsistence farming and handicraft-making for tourists. It is not simply quaint rural scenes or cloud-rimmed mountains. Appalachia has many sides and many people.

Of the collections contained within the archives, Kenneth Murray's photographs best reflect the many aspects of the Appalachian region.

In the introduction to his first photographic book, *Down to Earth—People of Appalachia,* Murray sets forth his view: "A row of tar-paper shacks adjoins a subdivision of new brick split-levels all with four columns in front, aluminum house trailers, TVA lakes, strip mines, country stores, shopping centers, four-lane highways, wooden foot bridges, country clubs and food stamps—they're all part of the new 'Mountain Empire.'"

His photographic collection includes panoramic landscapes and land ravaged by strip mining or by years of neglect. His portraits depict the prosperous and poor, the young and old, and the contented and troubled.

Kenneth Murray has become one of Appalachia's leading photo-journalists. As a cinematographer he worked for WKPT-TV, Kingsport, Tenn., and freelanced for "The Dick Cavett Show," "ABC Nightly News," "CBS Evening News" and UNESCO. As a photographer he has been employed by several newspapers and has free-lanced for national publications including *Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report* and the *New York Times.*

Murray's photographs have been exhibited throughout the eastern United States. In 1980 he was one of four artists represented at the exhibit, "The American Coal Miner," at the Inter-

Continued →

Williamson, W. Va.

national Center of Photography in New York. His photographs were included in the West Virginia exhibit at the World's Fair in Knoxville, Tenn. In addition Murray has published three photographic essays: *Down to Earth, The American Coal Miner*, and *Portrait of Appalachia*. His most recent book is *Highland Trails of Upper East Tennessee and Southwestern Virginia*.

Murray has recently been a fellow of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, documenting craft traditions in the Clinch River Valley. He is a graduate of East Tennessee State University.

The Kenneth Murray Photographs number approximately 1000 prints dating from the 1970s through the mid-1980s. The photographs are available for viewing and study at the archives. However, duplication and publication rights may only be obtained from the photographer. For more information on Kenneth Murray Photographs or other collections held by the archives, contact Archives of Appalachia, Box 22450A, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN 37614

—Norma Thomas and Marie Tedesco

Copperhill, Tenn.

Eidson, Tenn.

Foundry, Kingsport, Tenn.

Elmer Sturgill fords North Fork Creek with load of hay, Scott County, Va.

Kenneth Murray's books, *Portrait of Appalachia* ($7.95 paperback) and *Down to Earth* ($5.95 paperback) are published by the Appalachian Consortium Press, University Hall, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608. *Hiking Trails of Upper East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia* ($6.95 paperback) is available from the Jonesborough Tourism Council, Jonesborough, TN 37659.

Photos on these pages by Kenneth Murray. Used by permission.

EMINENT DOMAIN

Amy Gray

eminent domain *n* **1 :** superior dominion exerted by a sovereign state over all property within its boundaries that authorizes it to appropriate all or any part thereof to a necessary public use, reasonable compensation being made **2 :** a right wider than angary sometimes considered to exist in international law for one nation to appropriate the territory or property of another as a necessary measure of self-protection.

When I was a child I lived in America. Like the characters in the books I read, like the people I saw on TV, I lived in a real neighborhood. Daddy drove off to work every morning; Mother stayed home and cleaned house. She never baked cookies, it's true, but she was there when my brother and I bedraggled our way in from school every afternoon. The kids that lived on Hillcrest were American kids. We had a neighborhood bully. We had a budding beauty queen. We had Barbie dolls and GI Joes and sleds and bikes, and we all got new clothes twice a year, fall and spring. We were oblivious to everything but our immediate concerns, to all that was peripheral to our fleet hours of play.

I would have been as intently oblivious as the rest had it not been for my mother, who taught me the concept of "around here." Mother, born in Louisiana, moved to California at 14. She wound up in Johnson City on something very close to a whim when her best friend decided to go to Milligan instead of a college in one of those small mountainy states in the north. (The irony of ending up in a mountainy state in the south was not lost on Mother.) I can never remember a time that Mother did not drill away at the idea that we were different, that since she was not from "around here," and since she did not talk or think or act like she was from "around here," there was no reason my brother and I should either. My daddy, whose people had gotten to what would become East Tennessee in 1768 (two years before the law said they could be there), didn't see anything wrong with her logic. He had been schooled at an early age, of course, to believe that his grammar and accent were "bad," and that if he wanted to make something of himself, he too would have to speak differently, as if he were not from "around here." As he had learned, so would we.

Frankly, I never thought I was from "around here." The fact that I knew the difference, or some vague approximation of the difference, and the fact that all of us kids thought we were just regular Americans, somehow placed us in a class of otherness—and betterness, I'm afraid—than the unfortunates who could not escape the stigma of "here."

To do Mother justice, and to use her phrase, Johnson City must have seemed like another planet, a planet on which she didn't want us to have to live if we chose not to. How could we know there were other worlds if we did not understand the difference between here and there? And where, in all honesty, could Mother have learned anything good about "around here?" Daddy himself didn't see it, beyond pride in and loyalty to family. And who in the world would have wanted to be like those people on *The Real McCoys,* or Jethro and Ellie May, or Lil' Abner or—God forbid—*Hee Haw*?

The first fissure in the crystalline assurance of my difference was opened by my California grandmother. Mother and I flew out when I was eight (my brother stayed home and went to Tweetsie and killed his goldfish by overfeeding it.) The flight was as magical as any child could have hoped it would be. I watched the lights and clouds, answered the stewardesses politely, spilled nothing on my *Happy Hollisters* book Mother had bought me for the trip (in the book, the Hollisters flew to Puerto Rico and solved a mystery that had something to do with sugar cane.)

Somehow, it was still evening when we landed in California; I remember being surprised to see that everything except the pink air was brown and grey—no green anything, anywhere. That wasn't to prove the biggest surprise. The first thing Grammy said to me, right after I had only just said hello, took me completely by surprise. "My goodness, Amy!" she said. "How Southern you talk."

I was flabbergasted. "We don't sound Southern," I told her. "We talk just like the people on TV."

It took me years to understand why they all laughed.

That summer, too, right after Mother and I returned, another crack opened. Daddy's family had to move. My grandfather Tipton had a house and store in the Keystone section of Johnson City that had been bought up to make way for urban renewal. Nobody really wanted to try to explain to me why they had to leave if they wanted to stay, so I would follow around behind them, trying to find the answers in their quietness, their sadness, their muted frustration that was not quite anger. I wanted very much to know what would happen to the old wood and glass counters, to the drink machine with its icy, metallic smell, to the huge scale in the feed room out back, where Daddy used to try to ride the one-eyed pony kept to pull the grocery wagon. I never asked them. After that last afternoon in the store, Daddy never drove us through Keystone again.

But the place my grandparents moved to was wonderful! They had kept a farm in Roan Mountain—a house, a barn, the family cemetery, 60 acres, woods—ridge top to field on one side

of the road, pasture to river on the other. For a girl in love with Laura Ingalls Wilder, it was heaven, even if the only livestock around were chickens. I saw my first deer there, my first fox. I weeded a garden there for the first time. I found horseshoes, and the split shoes of oxen, long lost in the stalls of the old barn. I listened to my grandmother tell me about a panther that used to roam the woods; I couldn't understand how it had gotten there, and she couldn't understand why I thought it had escaped from the circus (Walt Disney called them cougars, or mountain lions, or pumas, like the shoe).

The monthly drive to the farm was formal, a slow ritual procession into the past. It did not occur to me, then, that you could not be any more "around here" than my grandparents. Instead, they seemed to be like the people I met in the books about the frontier. I had never read about mountain people, or hillbillies, or mountaineers—those words were not words I knew. But I knew about farmers, and frontier settlers, and that was who I saw my grandparents to be. I knew one of my uncles on the farm read Camus and Sartre and Kierkegaard for fun (big books, I thought of them), and that my other uncle played piano in a jazz/dinner-dance music trio. I knew, too, my grandfather sang gospel and played the banjo until he got too old. But there was no contradiction. All I had been taught to watch out for was the mysterious taint of "around here"—and none of my people seemed to me like they were from "around here."

Of course my relatives who had never lived any place but Roan Mountain or Elizabethton did fall into the abyss. I probably wouldn't have figured that out, though, had they not all sat on the porch in the summer and compared me—much to my detriment—to proverbial country cousins whom I had never met. In fact, my own relatives were the first group to whom I firmly attached that amorphous phrase "around here." And Mother was right. I wasn't like them, and they weren't like me, so no matter what Grammy had said about my accent (that casual remark nagged me for years), I still didn't act like *they* did.

Then, at 14, I read *Christy*—long to remain my favorite novel other than *True Grit*. *Christy*, a bestseller in the late 1960s by Catherine Marshall, told the story of 19-year-old Christy Huddleston who, in 1912, left Asheville to spend a year bringing the light of learning to a Presbyterian mission school in the wilds of the Tennessee Smokies. I saw in Christy much of what I believed about myself. And the book gave further meat to the bones of "around here." "Around here" really meant "out there," out in the mountains, where pioneers (that again) had fallen from nobility into darkness and despair. Christy taught me that it was okay to like folk songs—read ballads—but that everything negative I had heard about all the other music played by those from "here" (or "there") was true. (Including my grandfather, an idea that bothered me because I loved him and I loved it when my brother and I would sit beside him in his spare, neat room, and he would take his rosewood banjo from its case and scratch out a few notes for us.) From Christy I learned the word mountain. It was always an adjective, sometimes of approval (as in mountain crafts), usually of opprobrium. It was the word hidden beneath Mother's euphemism.

From the state of Tennessee I learned the term "eminent domain."

No sooner had my grandparents gotten to Roan Mountain (six months, I believe) than the state sent a surveyor to inform them that the area was going to be made into a park, and that they would, sooner or later, have to sell out and move again. The sooner or later took eight years; the summer before my senior year in high school they were back in Johnson City, in a house behind Bell Ridge—which marked the perimeter of what was left of Keystone.

From the beginning there was a duality to those hours I spent on the farm. Even before I really understood what the adults were talking about when they came (as they inevitably did) to the subject that made every visit end bleakly, I felt like the hours I could spend there had already been portioned out in meager ration. Always happy when I arrived, I was always depressed by the time we went home. And as I got older, I got angry, and frustrated. There was another "out there," one in which powerful people could do whatever they wanted to whomever they pleased, people against whom no one could stand.

Things really became skewed when I got to high school. Like every other adolescent I knew, I hated my hometown—because it was my hometown. I wanted out. Period. There was nothing to do, nowhere to go (and in my case, nobody to date, so even teen romance was out of the picture). Worst of all, it had finally dawned on all of us that, to a real extent, we had to admit that we were from "here"—since we had been born "here" and raised "here." What a terrible moment of truth that was! Instead of plain Americans, we had become a deformed hybrid.

That horrible revelation caused the pressure to be as unlike "around here" as possible to intensify. It was the age of the unconventional; everybody looked like a hippie, even the kids in the sororities and fraternities (technically they were called service organizations) who ran the school. Difference (within rigid convention) was the cachet everyone sought. I was different all right. I was smart, and although I was fairly quiet, I did speak out in class when I got aggravated. And I got good grades. And I read a lot. And all that added up to more difference than most of my peers could stomach.

But when I was 16, the smartest, hippest teacher in the school discovered me.

She taught history and political science. She was *not* from "around here." She was a feminist. She promoted "creativity." She used polysyllabic words. She liked students with brains. And she gave me a place to belong. In her classroom, everybody *else* was beyond the pale.

From her I learned a new of version of "around here": the phrase "to get out of here."

Despite the fear that I was sealing my own coffin as far as dating was concerned (I will thank you to remember how young I was), I finally came out in her class and said that I was a feminist. I began writing essays criticizing—well, anything I could think of, mainly the big boys with the big bucks like the ones pushing my family off the farm (although at that time I hadn't

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made the connection). It seemed that I could not go too far; the more politicized I became, the more she egged me on.

She also egged me on in my hatred of Johnson City, which under her encouragement soon became a generic hatred of anything "mountain" —except the farm, of course. She urged me not to go to school at East Tennessee State University, to become a lawyer, not a teacher, to "get out" as soon as I could. (My uncle the piano player was urging me to do the same thing. Mother, however, for what reason I could not fathom, had started pushing the other way.) Her words did not fall amongst the tares. I jumped to take her elective course my senior year, giving her another chance to reinforce my drive to *get out*.

And that year I had another teacher, her rival in coolness, who drove me even farther down that road. But this teacher did tell me that teaching was a good and noble (if underappreciated) profession, and that it was okay if expediency—not to mention my parents—forced me to go to State, as long as I "got out of here" as soon as I graduated.

Eventually I fell from grace with both of them, into the ranks of the unredeemed. It was inevitable. I decided I *liked* State. I decided being a teacher wasn't such awful karma. But tellingly, even as going to the farm had made me both happy and sad, I could not feel the one way about "here" that they wanted me to feel. I tried and tried, but only part of me detested "here" in the way that they had groomed me. I hated it, but I was drawn to the woods and the high places. Probably the most bizarre manifestation of this split would present itself when my friends and I would drive our clunkers (Falcons, Fairlanes, old Chevys) way up in the hills, to Beauty Spot, to the Roan, to Watauga—anywhere we could get to and come back from in an afternoon. We would sit in the sun, mountains all around us, and talk about where we were going to move once we graduated.

It sneaked up on me, the resolution to this conflict I could not even name. It sneaked up on me through my stereo. Since high school I had listened to electric English folk, Steeleye Span, Pentangle. One afternoon in the Record Bar, looking for new British music, I came on an album of Kentucky fiddle tunes. I think I bought it because somebody said, "You don't *like* that stuff, do you?" It turned out that I did. Officially, I still made fun of country music, and I still sat with Daddy during *Hee Haw* only because it made him happy, but the worm of doubt had crept to the vine of separateness from "here" that had shaded me so long. So when I got the chance to go to the fiddler's convention in Galax that summer (I was 20 by then), I went—just because I went nearly anywhere I got asked to go only to get out of the house, and just because someone said "Why do you want to go *there?*"" And at Galax I discovered that I liked "that stuff" even more than I thought.

And that somehow, despite everything, many of the songs they sang that weekend, many of the tunes I heard, had by some miracle already instilled themselves in my brain. Where I heard them before I had no idea.

Something similar had happened to my lifelong friend whom I ran into that fall when school started. (I ran into her because for awhile we would get mad at each other and not speak for two or three years, but like family, we always made it up.) She too had "discovered" mountain music—her sister had bought the Nitty Gritty "Circle" album about the time I was in Galax. She too wanted to learn to clog. And she too wanted to find out more about the musicians in her family—both of us, coming slowly to see for the first time that maybe all this stuff from "around here" was something that wasn't quite as awful as we had been taught to believe. (Yes, we still thought "maybe.")

And she told me about an anthropology class her sister had taken that was taught by a man who played the fiddle.

You had better believe that I hot-footed it to the next class that man taught. And in that class, for the first time, I began to sort out the conflicts, the duality, which I had balanced blindly for so long. I had lived in America until I was fifteen. I lived in a non-place after that. But in that class, I learned that where I lived was Appalachia—and that Appalachia was now and had always been a part of America, too.

I came from a place that was two places at once.

I could hardly believe what that class gave me, a gift beyond imagination. Think of it! "Around here" we had a living culture. (Meaning I didn't have to make fun of country music any more, and that I didn't have to pretend that I was watching *Hee Haw* just to keep Daddy company). "Around here" we had a history of exploitation—both inside and outside. (The meaning of which I understood all too precisely.) And heresy of heresies, "around here" wasn't really such a bad place to be from—or to act like we were from, or even to talk like we were from. (Meaning that I could finally say things like "sulled up" and "trifling whelp" and "striped snake" in public if I had a mind to.) I learned many, many more things about "here," many more things than there is time or necessity to tell. But I want to tell the one thing I learned that never came up in the text, or the lectures, or the tests, except perhaps by implication.

I learned that more than just land can be eminent domained.

The Widow Riley Tells It Like It Is

You know. this place used to be
wonderful. Now, I don't know what
it is. the people, or what it is.
Like, ol' Jiggs Shafer, sat over there
for how many years and didn't even
sweep the flies out of his place
I mean, o.k., he had a business
I told him, Jiggs, you should save
those flies, have 'em preserved
I mean, how many people have antique
flies? I mean, five, ten years
flies in your window. Anyway, he
could have fixed his business up
But he just let it go. I don't
mean anything derogatory about him
Ol' Jiggs, God bless him, I've known
him all my life. But as for making
anything beautiful, well, forget it

—P. J. Laska

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You can't go home if you haven't been away

Pauline Binkley Cheek

When folklorist and philosopher John Ramsay returned from a sabbatical year in Denmark he commented that the experience had made him more of an American. Although I thought that I understood what he was saying at the time, I have in the past year come to a far deeper appreciation of his wisdom. My perspective began to enlarge last spring when I read *The Journey is Home*, by Tennessee theologian Nelle Morton. Reflection upon the significance of that title challenged me to confront an issue that has nagged me for almost a quarter of a century, ever since my husband and I moved to Mars Hill, N.C., and chose to identify ourselves as Appalachians.

Always wary of being hypocritical and presumptuous, I made this claim with reservations, for I knew myself to be open to contradiction on several counts. Having a Connecticut Yankee mother and having been born in Durham, N.C., I could not claim birthright to a geographical location. Through the years, therefore, my ambivalence has led to this line of rationalization: because I identified intensely with my paternal grandparents, who lived in the Brushy Mountain foothills, I internalized the values of their way of life. This included, to me, a sense of place, a closeness with family and community, mutuality with nature, the Bible, independence, loyalty, work, frugality, ingenuity, storytelling, handicrafts and music. Since these have often been termed Appalachian, I felt that I might qualify on the basis of heritage.

Furthermore, I argued, my husband and I had made a commitment to the enhancement of Appalachia, an avowal that we sought to actualize through attendance at every Appalachian seminar, workshop and event we could find and through participation in all the community and regional activities open to a family of five. As I engaged in oral history projects, wrote poems and articles and made friends through church, Agricultural Extension Service and various cooperative endeavors, I forgot distinctions. Gradually the question of identification faded from my mind—except at those Appalachian Studies meetings where academicians debated interminably the definition of "Appalachia" and fostered paranoia over being stereotyped.

Recoiling from all the negative connotations of this label, I felt uncomfortable on several scores. Some of the attributes denigrated as stereotypical, for example, I was quite happy to acknowledge as laudatory. On the other hand, I bristled over the fact that a specialized group — "outsiders," "do-gooders," and/or academicians — assumed the authority of defining both "Appalachia" and "stereotypical Appalachian." Even more I resented the disempowerment of any labeling because it automatically dehumanizes a subject (including me) into an object. But, my inner voice queried, am I not guilty of labeling? Am I not adding to this victimization by designating myself as "Appalachian writer," a title that might give me advantages or feed my ego at the possible expense of others?

My dilemma now having ethical overtones, I reflected upon Nelle Morton's affirmation of a sense of place in light of Thomas Wolfe's claim that you can't go home again. Home, roots, ecological relationship with the land, the particular in a global perspective—all these are essential to my selfhood, yet I had serious questions as to whether there had to be a particular place of identification. "You can't go home if you haven't been away" was the title of one of my early poems, but I had not resolved the issue of how specifically one identifies home. After reading Nelle Morton I decided that I could never leave home. Instead I would keep my roots in Appalachia but travel as widely as possible to increase my concept of home. Initiation into other world views would help me define the distinctives of my own and might enable me to identify universals.

The satisfaction I felt over this resolution was short-lived, however. After a semester as a student among people who were virtually ignorant of Appalachia other than as a ridiculous caricature, I empathized indignantly with all those Appalachians who have smarted under successive waves of romanticist, exploitative, missionary, craft-revivalist, war-

on-poverty labelers. I was definitely an exile in a foreign land, and my reaction was psychosomatic. "How can I define myself to these people?" I asked myself. "What is my ethos?"

The answer came when I stood in the midst of a tiny frame building in a remote area in Belize, a developing Central American country where only five percent of the land is cultivated. For two weeks I had been staying with a Belizean teacher, a member of the Baha'i faith eager to converse with a Christian. During the day I had been traveling with a lay Methodist minister and a farm woman, mother of 13, to visit all the people who were forming themselves into a mutual self-help agency for rural families to improve the quality of their lives. On this last day of my stay people from six diffusely settled communities were meeting for the first time to identify needs, set priorities, assess resources and engage in prayer. Looking around the room, crowded to overflowing, I was moved beyond words. Unlike those travelers who became ill from culture shock, I knew myself to be at home among brothers and sisters in a global community. Our commonality lay in the fact that we derive our personhood from membership in a particular family, a commitment to a particular place and transformation through experiential faith.

Now I know that for me, Appalachia is not a stereotype, not even an archetype, but a prototype. In the 1960s, when I identified Appalachia as my particular place, I was creating a symbol for a particular understanding of myself in relationship to other people, to the land and to God. Each time I call myself an Appalachian I am reaffirming the symbol whereby I live out that relationship. By journeying out into the world I discover my own centering in a global community. And so, henceforth, I confidently declare that having been to Belize I am more of a world citizen but also more of an Appalachian.

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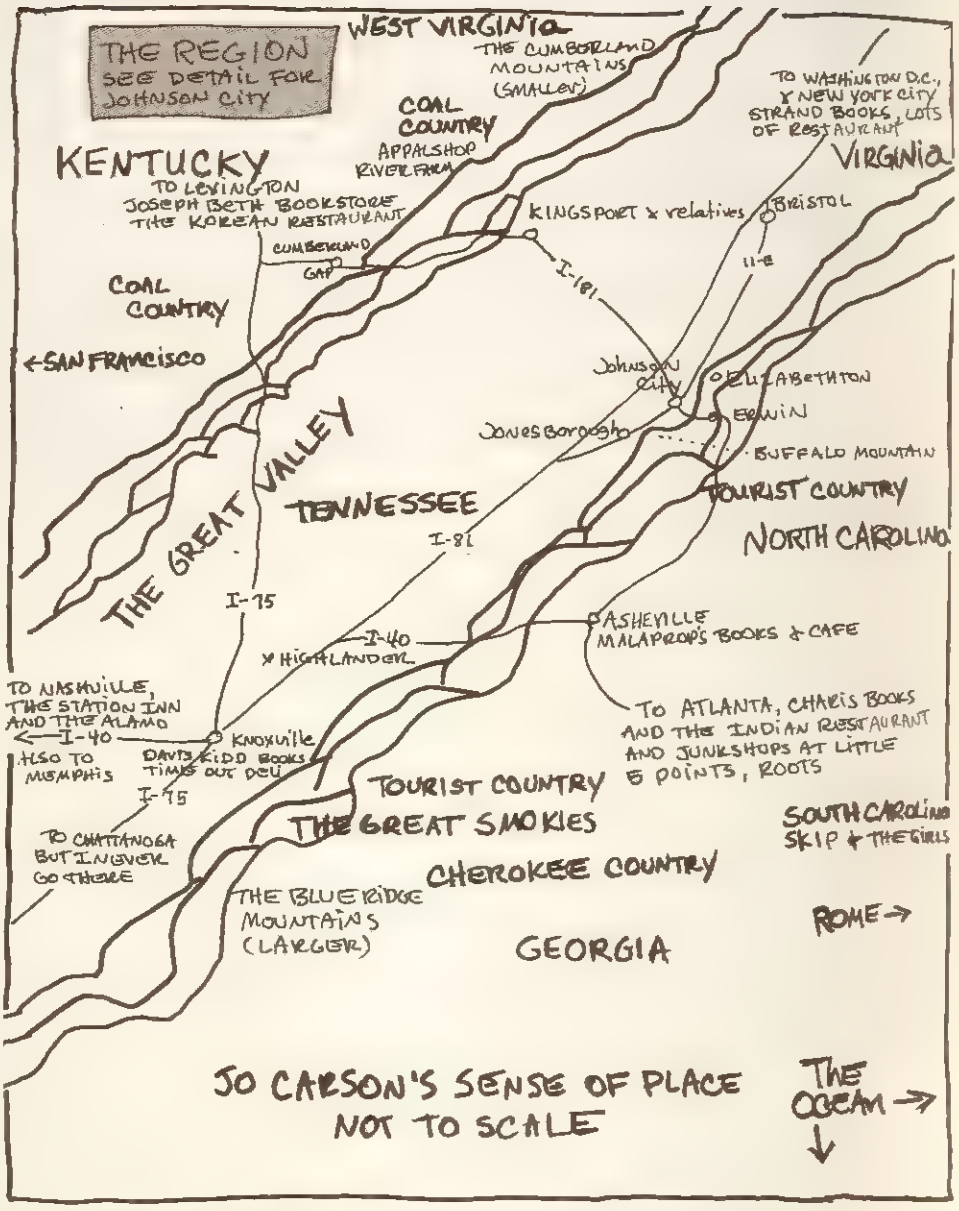
Jo Carson Traces her Routes #1



Words on Stone

He'd had poetry.
And lots of George
Jones and Merle Haggard
on the radio.

It wasn't enough.

—Wayne Hogan

Wayne Hogan is a freelance writer and illustrator from Cookeville, Tenn. His poems have appeared in ***MSS, Cotton Boll, Crab Creek Review*** *and elsewhere.*

Letcher

by Sondra Millner

Old folks were all the time saying, "Be careful what you ask for. You might get it." And Lord I know it don't make no sense. I know every day there was coal being mined in these mountains there were men being crushed and mangled and no half wish of mine could have ever changed that. But there had been plenty of our married times that I wanted in the worst way to see Henry ruffled. To see him ranting and raving like we all do one time or nother. But not Henry. He musta been planted deep. He held steady and rooted.

Well on Christmas Eve, 1911, I got my half-wish. I don't recollect running from my shanty to the boarding dock at the railroad tracks. I do know I heard Henry before I saw him, and I felt them screams slamming into the thick cold air I was pushing my way through.

I saw Henry laying there twisting like a half-dead trout throwed up on the riverbank. Screaming, begging God to just take him. One leg was crushed and bleeding through the blankets, the other one gone at the knee—just showing white bone and blood. Laying there wet and ash colored, cussing God while they poured whiskey on his stump and down his throat.

He was shrieking in a voice I'd never heard before. It came up out of his guts like rock flying deep out the earth when dynamite blows.

It made me cold. Set my body to shaking. Made me jump back from holding him. Screams kept crashing out so I tried to smother them. Pushed his head into my bosom. I wanted to push the pain into my body. Women know pain—made for pain. We can bend with it and come back up with it. I could take it Lord, but not him. Henry ain't know nothing about bending.

I held his soaking head tight to my bosom and the sound wadn't so bad then. My body carried the trembling from him and we shook together like the wooden shanties in the bottom when the number eight train rolls by. I held so tight on to him for so long that we got old waiting there for that train. The shrieking had drained away that evening and left us a moaning, trembling little heap when they pried my arms from round him and lifted him onto the train. Joe Dandridge hopped up there with Henry. Miss Etrula held on to me. That train grunted its way on to Welch, to the Miner's Hospital, and there wadn't nothing left of me.

For a long time there wadn't nothing left of me. Nothing for the boys or the new baby that came in January. Joe Henry was a early baby and I didn't have it in me to fret much over him. Birthing him hadn't even pained me like it was sposed to. It was just one more time to get through.

Rosetta and Miss Etrula, the midwife, closed in around me. Rosetta'd come over early, gather the boys and keep them with her chaps bout all day. James musta first started talking Tally then. Miss Etrula faded in and out my house, brewing alfalfa and raspberry-leaf tea, putting on bones and vegetables for stew, calling after James to come slop the hogs or bring in buckets of coal and water.

Joe Dandridge made it back from Welch before the New Year. Early New Year's morning, he came with my first word on Henry. The doctor at the Miner's Hospital had pulled lumps of coal out of his leg, sewed up the stump, and once they was sure gangrene wadn't setting in, they said they'd see about a wooden leg. Henry might make it home by summer.

Henry and Joe were friends before we was married, and my boys always loved to see him, flitted around him like moths around a lantern. Joe stayed a spell, played with the boys, gave them candy sticks and kinda eased their scaredness. I had my hands full, my mind and my belly ready to burst and I didn't see then how bad off the boys was feeling. Right fore he left, Joe Dandridge told me Henry wanted me to know he was sorry.

I found a side of salted pork in the shed when Joe Dandridge left. The boys and me wadn't wanting for food. Henry had staked out a garden patch and put a hog pen up in the woods behind the shanty when we first came to Berwind. In the spring, we'd borry a mule for plowing and James would help me put out corn, tomatoes, string beans, pole beans, salad greens, cukes and later on the Tally squash seeds that Rosetta gave me. We didn't trouble with eating off Coal Company scrip cept for staples and a little candy for the boys every now and then.

Continued →

One Sunday in November, after the first hard frost, Henry, Joe Dandridge and Leo Veneri did their butchering, going from one's house to the others. Our two was butchered right up from the far corner of the shed. You can't kill hogs too near their pen. Blood smell drives them bout wild—starts them squealing, ramming and trying to tear their pens apart.

I spent that day and days after that one soaking, salting, scraping and hanging meat. Those nights I tried to soak the salt out of my hands. Soaked them in cold water and covered them in vaseline but they was still raw. And that blood smell was powerful. It stayed for days in the air, on my skin and clothes, frozen in red ridges under my clothes line. Made it hard for me to keep my food down. But we wadn't going winter hungry like some of the Way-South coloreds and new Tallys eating on next month's scrip and at pay day getting nothing at all but a piece of paper with a red snake stamped on it. Henry told me he saw grown men look at that snake and cry, right there at the pay window.

Henry was gone. Wadn't dead but gone just the same, and I was waiting. Waiting for him and waiting for the Pocahontas Coal Company to come move me out. We'd been moved out before—strike times or when somebody got wind of Henry's meetings in the woods with the UMW men. Most strike times we moved out ourselves late at night before Baldwin-Felts got a chance to bust up our little stuff and make us feel small and raggedy. More times than I want to remember, I seen the pitiful busted-up piles of furniture, clothes still in the drawers, pots and pans with food stuck to the bottoms, all thrown together outside of some miner's used-to-be home. Ain't nothing small about me, and I ain't never been raggedy and Henry ain't never allow me to feel that I was. Henry call me a strong, good-looking woman.

This time Henry wadn't there to get us packed and off their land fore sun-up. He wadn't there to rub James' face with the back of his hand, haul Howard onto his shoulder and load us onto somebody's wagon like we was just taking us a Sunday ride.

I ain't never bit my tongue, never been sickly nor afraid of working up a man's sweat. But here I was sitting in a shanty rocking, pulled up close to the fire like some little flower of a girl that ain't never faced the world.

Much of a rock Henry was for me. I knew I was a better woman than that. Sitting and waiting for a body that couldn't do for herself. I didn't want to make do by myself—but deep down, I knew I could.

That winter was cold as a witch's tit. I can't swear to it, since I wadn't outside to judge how thick the ice was on the creek, it sure seemed like the coldest winter in my lifetime. Near the end of February, the sun started burning the mist off before noon and the shiny white tree trunks of ice that grow off the pinnacle on the northern slope of Elk Mountain started cracking in the middle of the night. Anyway, night time was when I heard them. In Sagamore Hollow in the daytime you couldn't hear Gabriel blow his horn with the trains clanking and the coal rumbling at the tipple. And even though that pinnacle was a good mile as the crow flies from my shanty—two or three miles if you walk there, the sound of that ice busting up carried sharp clear to my bedroom. Just made it seem like good sense to pull up to the fire and wait.

Miss Etrula started pushing me after a while. Telling me to sweep the floors, that I needed to cut them curls off Howard before he started thinking he was a girl, fussing with me to spread some ashes on them icy front steps for somebody broke they neck coming to check on me. Now me and her both knew not 10 souls a year came in my house by the front door. I kept doing what I had to do. Nursed the baby and changed him but mostly drawed closer to the fire and rocked.

The tiredness was leaving me slow, and right when that cold winter started breaking, I took the baby and the boys over to Rosetta's and came off my hill for the first time since Christmas Eve. My legs got acquainted with the slushy dips and ditches, and I gathered up my thoughts.

The path from our shanties ended by the side of the Company Store, and you had to take a pretty good step up to the wooden walkway there. That walkway didn't make no sense. It ran in front of the Company Store, jutted out a few yards on both sides and had a couple of rickety steps putting you back on the dirt and cinder paths that served the rest of Sagamore Hollow. I took a deep breath and stepped up on their walk.

I hadn't done no wrong and wadn't coming to beg, but I had a shamed feeling knotting up my insides. Like when I was a youngun and my Momma caught me wrong. I'd try to sink back into myself, hang my head and start to mumbling, staring at a spot where I'd be pushing dirt around with the tip of my shoe. Momma would get more vexed with me for staring at that ground than for the mischief I'd done.

"Ifen you done wrong, own up to it. Don't you go hanging your head and talking down in yourself. You hang your head for God Almighty, but you look every living soul in the eye. You my chile. Ain't got nothing to be shamed of."

I'd heard that speech a hundred times and caught myself telling it to James 'bout every week. I rolled my shoulders back and pushed open the carved cherry wood door that was even more out of place in Sagamore Hollow than that useless sidewalk. It had a thick fancy frosted glass on the top, a fine shiny brass knob and pretty carvings that I know wadn't meant to be stuck on the front of a two-story, soot gray coal camp Company Store. That door was more solid than any other thing Pocahontas Coal Company built in that hollow.

I stopped tarrying and marched on in past covered barrels, bulging sacks hanging from the walls, back past shelves crammed full of the food and clothes miners work theyselves to the bone trying to get enough of. I musta looked like I didn't come by to buy when I passed Mr. Wythe propped behind his long counter like he was guarding them pretty ruffly dolls hanging up behind him. Made me

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think about that stringy-haired, skinny little Polack girl I saw right before Christmas. That child didn't have nary a stocking or proper shoes, and she was all eyes, mouth wide open, looking up at one of them dolls like she was watching Mother Mary come down from Heaven. Younguns like her get grown believing they meant to be poor and that poor folks ain't sposed to have red satin ruffly pretty things.

"Can I help you please?"

Mr. Wythe always kept his mouth drawed tight—even when he talked. Brother Rash told me one time that chinched-mouth folks was stingy. You can't hold your mouth tight without squeezing your bottom, and you gotta be more than stingy to want to hold onto what oughta come out down there. Brother Rash always kept up some foolishness, but I've seen a passel of chinched-mouth stingy folks.

"Now Letcher girl, what you want?"

Not even that sneering little man had ever called me "Letcher girl" when Henry was round. I pushed that back in my head and didn't answer, seeing as how my name wadn't nothing but Mrs. Millner to him. I walked on through the door off to the side where everybody knew he sold mason jars of moonshine them wild-looking hill folks bought down. Henry knew most of them too. Could look at them and know they families from his boy days.

On the back end of that dark jar-hiding room was the door to the Coal Company Dining Hall where the mine superintendent, his assistants, the mine boss, tipple boss, weigh master and sometimes even the weight foreman and mine foremen came to eat, drink and talk about business; about men like my Henry like they was talking about oxen or mules to be moved around and worked till they dropped.

Those clean Company men wadn't like the white men back home where they'd smile and talk to you like you couldn't understand and didn't know they thought you was half a step above their livestock.

The top Company man, the mine owner, came down from Philadelphia ever month or so with his group, passing right on through to their other mines, but every now and then they'd stay the night in one of the rooms upstairs over the company store. The superintendents they left was more than likely born a county or two away and been schooled just enough to want to look down on where they come from. Schooled just enough to think any man that got dirty working was dirt. Once you came up out of their mines, they didn't treat you like livestock, they treated you like ants. Like you was too small to be seen or heard or even thought about too often. And it surely wadn't beyond them to just trample on over you.

I'd never had no reason to come in the Dining Hall—I didn't do no kitchen work, and I wadn't no fancy woman. It was a pretty room though. That cherry door woulda fit on that room, with the red peacock rugs, tassels on the tablecloths and tall brass lamps and their sained glass lamp shades. That musta been what the big old church windows in the Old Country that got Rosetta all blurry-eyed when she talked about it looked like.

It was a pretty room, but I wadn't about to stand there gawking. Wadn't nothing Pocy Coal Company had was gonna make my mouth water. All I wanted was my Henry back in one piece, and they ain't have no special ties to the Almighty that could give me that.

A couple fellas with stiff white shirts and dark vests were hunched over a table near the door. They looked alike, one older than the other, and they got quiet when I stepped in, looked me over a bit then turnt back to their low talking. Them lamps put out a pretty glow, but they wadn't much good for real seeing. Still, I didn't think I knew them two. I did see Bailey, Henry's tipple boss, sitting in the back by a window that looked down the hollow, the way the tracks leave. A bit of sun was coming through the window, and he was chomping on a long cigar and reading the paper. I was glad it was only a few people there. As I got closer I could see he was reading the Charleston paper. I liked that one myself. I don't think nobody's Coal Company owned it, so you got some good news every now and then, instead of them lies the other paper always wrote about, Reds and Rabble-rousers. Well, anyway, that was Bailey, the one what asked Henry to work on Christmas Eve. The Lord works in mysterious ways. Henry kinda liked Bailey as much as he did any of them that didn't work the holes. He said Bailey's folks was spread out over half the state, and Henry had worked in the holes with his relations.

Bailey didn't look up til I was standing right across the table from him. Then real slow, he tapped a long ash from his cigar into a china cup, then kinda raised his eyes up at me. I was standing over him, looking down on a thin spot in the top of his head. He had a head full of thick red hair parted in the middle just like Henry's. But Henry's hair aways smelled like wildroot and laid black and wavy on his head like heavy satin. I almost laughed at Bailey — he was sure gonna look funny in a couple of years, all that thick red hair growing around a shiny pink bald spot. Probably it'll look like a forest of pines growing around a big pretty lake.

That's one time I caught myself—he was grinning too hard, nodding his head, had pushed his chair back and half stood up.

"Well, how do Miss Letcher, so sorry to hear bout Henry. Sure was my finest brakeman. Waiting for him to be back with us soon Miss Letcher."

The damned fool had better shut off that mess spilling from his mouth and come up for air. I spoke low and slow.

"I'm fair-to-middlin Mr. Bailey. How you do? Thank you for your concerns, but seeing as how his leg is gone I don't believe he'll be jumping offen any more cars and braking for anybody."

He started turning redder, was already a big ole red-cheeked man. But I wadn't here to vex him. As ornery as I felt it wadn't Bailey's doings, so I smiled and asked.

"Mind ifen I sit down?"

Bailey started up that trap again.

"Oh scuse my manners Miss Letcher, have a seat. Want something to eat? Some coffee? I'll call the girl."

"No thank you, I'll just be a minute. You might not be the right one to ask, but I got to start somewheres. Just want to ask when y'alls planning on moving me and my boys out. See I'd want a week or so to send word to my brothers back in Virginia, so they could come get us. And of course, get word to Henry bout where we'd be."

Now was my time for the red to start

creeping up the back of my neck cause that fool man was sitting there chomping on that cigar and grinning away, and I hadn't said a thing that was amusing. Took his time to answer back too.

"Well Miss Letcher, I declare. We'd done made rangements. Ain't nobody tell you at the Company Office when you went after Henry's insurance pay?"

Now Bailey had been round coal camps long enough not to be such a fool. Since when did they ever give out that insurance pay lest they died in the hole, even then they was apt to take it back for owings? So how come I was sposed to go down there begging just to hear them tell how Henry caused his own accident so they wadn't paying. They'd blame mine explosions on dead men, slate falls, cave-ins, gas poisonings, all on the miners. Never did pay out. I knew that, and Bailey shoulda known I wadn't nobody's fool.

Bailey kept on talking.

"Joe Dandridge come to see me last month bout yall. Said he'd just left Henry at the Miner's Hospital. Now Miss Letcher I ain't saying that it was my fault, but I felt might poor about Henry. I got rid of that motorman, Glover, didn't know he was that hard a drinker, but I was the one what asked Henry to work, and I put that drunken Glover on with him."

There he went looking at his coffee cup and tapping that cigar, only it hadn't had time to grow now more ashes on it.

"So what you saying, Mr. Bailey?"

"Miss Letcher, I ain't making no promises, they ain't mine to make, but there ain't no plans to move Henry's family out right away. I signed off on his compensation papers last week and swore to Joe Dandridge then that he'd be the first to know if the Company decides to cause any changes for you and the boys."

Well by then my mouth was open, and I was sweating like a horse though my good dress. I musta seemed like a ungrateful hussy cause I had some quick good-byes and thank yous, turnt tail and got out of that Company Store in a hurry.

I was real happy with the news that I had a roof over my head a while longer and maybe even a piece of compensation change coming my way, but as soon as I started my way back up to the hill something sad just started creeping in with every step. I was 23 years old, Henry had just turnt 30 in January, and it just wadn't fair to cripple him up. It wadn't fair to me. Sometimes your worrying and understanding and crying over other folks don't leave time to cry for yourself. Well, walking up that hill with a little of my burden lifted—I cried for me. Twenty-three years old, three chaps, a crippled husband and no family nearby for me to crawl back into. I just let them hot tears burn a path down my cheeks. For me.

I slowed my walking down and let myself think about all the things I'd held back from thinking before. Like Henry dying. I thought about it and finally figured I could live through it without losing my mind or my health. I loved Henry, but loving him and the boys didn't make me disappear. Right then I started feeling good and started getting mad.

That damned Henry had gone off and got hisself crippled up was still trying to run everything all by himself. He could get together with Joe Dandridge and half of creation to plan out my life and don't mind not asking me to join in the deciding—he wadn't even gonna tell me about it til it was all set. I'd got two letters from Henry—real short and proper, talking about God and give the boys his regards. Hell, in Sagamore Hollow Pocy Coal Company was bigger than God, and Henry ain't mention nothing about their doings. Henry didn't mind discussing matters with Joe Dandridge while I was the one that slept in his bed and washed his dirty drawers, the most he'd discuss with me was what I was planting where. Everything else, he decided then told me.

Joe Dandridge coulda parted his lips to let me know we had a roof over our heads a while longer. He'd stopped by the week before to check on the boys he said. I was cooking, and he played with them a spell, chit chatted with me about the weather, about what I'd heard from Henry. Ain't mention no compensation papers to me, and Joe knew I could read and write. I ain't grow up that far back in the country.

Hurt or not, Henry was showing his natural colors. Now spose I'd already sent word to Brother Rash to come for me; and it was time to start breaking ground for a garden, I coulda been a planning that knowing I'd be there to bring it in. Henry was so set on doing for this family, he coulda done a lot for me by letting me in on it. I had to worry with being Momma and Poppa to the boys and the new one hadn't never set eyes on a Poppa.

If he had his strength back or not I was going home and posting him a letter and he could call me all the evil, ungrateful hussies he wanted to. Tell the truth Henry ain't never called me nothing bad—he'd say I was mule-headed or hot-tempered, and both of them was true. I know he musta thought up a lot of bitches and heifers though. And I'd called him everything but a child of God at one time or nother. Henry'd say I wadn't being ladylike then. Well this letter sure wadn't gonna be ladylike either. I didn't feel particularly ladylike.

Lord, I got back to my shanty fore I knew it and had huffed up big sweat rings under my arms and a long wet mark down my back. I came through the shed and went on in the kitchen, I wanted to put my good hat back in the hat box on top of my dresser. A soul can't even breathe in they own house. There at my kitchen table sat Miss Etrula looking up at me with them old heavy-lidded lizard eyes. She was half smiling, showing off brown slimy snuff stuck to her gums—my old hen had more teeth than her.

"Well Missy, I sees we's feeling might spry today. Out a strolling and all, huh?"

"Oh how do Miss Etrula. I'm just fair-to-middlin, didn't know you was here."

I was wishing to hell she'd go home fore I lost track of the piece of my mind I wanted to post in that letter to Henry.

"Don't see why not. I be's here every morning since Christmas, or ain't you noticed? Saw you strutting off down the holler."

"Miss Etrula I done told you thank you every day since Christmas. I am feeling better now. I can make do fairly well. I just went down to the bottom to take care of some business."

I went on back through the front room to my room. Lord, that old woman had stood by me like a mother. I couldn't go getting fresh with her, but she was one nosey old biddy. Didn't make no bones about being nosey either.

"Well I'd a been happy to send by

Obe after any business. You know he work the late shift. Him and me been getting your mail, picked up your needings at the store; ain't no trouble is it Missy?"

I'd left my hat box on the bed and was thankful the boys wadn't home, they'd a squashed it for sure. I hung my shawl on the nail by the front door and started to chink the fire in the Warm Morning. That old heifer was gonna keep at it.

"No, Miss Etrula. I just had a little talk with Bailey at the Dining Hall. He was Henry's tipple boss, and he told me we could stay here in the house for the time being. Said he'd been in touch with Henry."

Miss Etrula straightened up and started clucking her tongue. I started clinking hard with the poker, stirring up ashes and watching little blue streams of fire shoot up from the coals. Them coals were hot, ready for a fat red ash log that would burn till evening.

"Well chile, the Dining Hall huh? You knows white mens. Better watch yourself. Don't look good for a married Colored woman to be lolly-gagging in the Dining Hall. Mark my words, that Bailey man got designs, he'll be sniffing round here like you a bitch in heat. Pocy Coal Company don't give nuttin for free—cept em thar graveyard plots over on Crumpecker Mountain."

I picked up a pine log off the top of the stack behind the stove, shoved it in, slammed the Warm Morning door and threw the poker towards the wood.

"Miss Etrula! I said he done been in touch with Henry. They got it all worked out!"

I was back at the kitchen door, hands on my hips, ready to ask her to take her mind out the gutter and her raggedy ass home.

"He just said he'd promised to let Henry and Joe Dandridge know for the Coal Company put us out."

She was digging for snuff in her apron, legs spread wide like she was shelling beans. All I needed then was for her to stir up some mess bout me and Bailey, for Henry to get word of that. If he thought I ain't have enough sense to take care of his compensation business he might be fool enough to believe that kinda crap. I'd walk the streets of Cinder Bottom or go down to Keystone and sell it in Miss Lucy's fore I'd lay with some tipple boss to keep a tin shanty roof over my head.

"Well, evening Miss Etrula. I got to go get my boys from Rosetta's."

I grabbed my shawl I'd just hung on the nail and slammed out my front door.

Reeling In

In the days of his dying, my grandfather Terry
would sit afternoons by his new pond fishing,
his body motionless except
for the good right arm, casting
again and again the red-and-white bobber
out to the pond's center,
then reeling it in
through the wash of each slowly spreading
concentric wave.

Later, in the cool of evening,
the air damp and thrilling
with thunder, he'd sit
on the porch in a gaunt iron chair,
three coats of paint flaking,
and tell me again the old story —
how he, only twenty, having just married
my grandmother the schoolteacher
and anxious to prove himself
farming her people's land,
would be out before sun-up,
two fifty-pound bags of seed corn
strapped to his back, sowing
the Knob on a contour.
He'd do it for days, all day walking
the newly plowed ground,
then do it all over again, shouldering
fertilizer instead of seed.

He told me less about when he ran with a mean bunch of brothers,
the Stones, from Turkey Creek.
"Shotgun," they called him,
his middle name being Winchester.
"Sometimes I feel like I've lived
two or three lives," he'd say.

And when he'd fall asleep
in the chair in the fragrant dusk,
head thrown back, fingers
laced over his belly, taking his ease
after eighty years, two or three lives,
I'd close my eyes and see my grandfather,
"Shotgun" Terry, six-foot-four, the sun
exploding from his blond hair,
come striding through concentric waves of corn,
not an ounce of anything on his back.

—Jim Clark

Jim Clark, of Byrdstown, Tenn., lives in Athens, Ga., where he is an assistant professor of English and Director of Creative Writing at the University of Georgia. His poems have appeared in ***Southern Poetry Review, Raccoon, Greensboro Review, Poem*** *and others.*

Baptismal

by Randy Oakes

I was nine when they tried to baptize Thelma the first time. The drapes of the baptistery opened, and Preacher Plume and Thelma stepped into the water from opposite sides of the pool. They met, and the preacher grasped Thelma's hand. Some kids were laughing a few pews in front of us. "Them kids," my mother said. "They don't know what church is." I wondered whether I knew what church was, and I vowed to find out in case my mother asked.

Preacher Plume said a few words. He placed a handkerchief over Thelma's mouth and eased her back into the water. His neck muscles bulged. The water churned, but he could not raise her. Preacher Plume looked at the congregation. Thelma kicked. The deacons sprang into action like a SWAT team. They ran through the door reserved for choir members and rescued Thelma, after brushing aside Preacher Plume. Thelma was not officially baptized.

Preacher Plume left within a month, a chastened and defeated man. He accepted a church in the mountains. Thelma, who suffered from an eating disorder, grew more depressed. By the time the next preacher got his feet wet, she was well over two-fifty. "But she has a pretty face," my mother said. "You can take notice of it. All fat women have pretty faces." My father said, "That woman's solid. She's built like a good piano."

My father and several other deacons formed an *ad hoc* committee to find precedents establishing that Thelma might be considered baptized. But two old-school Southern Baptists argued vehemently that Thelma must be lowered and raised by an ordained minister, not by an ordained minister and a pack of deacons.

So Dr. Dunn had his chance. I don't know why the pulpit committee chose him, for he had a D.D. degree and most of the deacons considered him uppity. Perhaps they chose him because he was big: at least six inches taller than Plume. By this time I was 10, and I had moved up to join the noisy boys in the pew in front of my parents. His sermons were dry, and my parents were angered and insulted by his reference to his "undergraduate" and "graduate" years. But Pete and Jake and I were too busy speculating about Thelma's chances to worry about dry sermons.

All three of us belonged to established families of the church, and I was allowed to sit with them in church because I had passed the baptism test. I had been dunked with dignity. I had not kicked. When the minister raised me, I expected cheers from the congregation. Pete and Jake met me sagely after the service. We've been friends since.

During the week we spent afternoons in my yard, where my father had recently erected a basketball goal. We talked about tests of strength, and we fought often. Jake swore that, if given the opportunity, Hoss Cartwright could beat up both Little Joe and Ben at the same time. Adam was my favorite brother and he had recently left the show, so I had little stake in the argument. Pete argued that Little Joe could beat up Hoss any day, and besides, anybody who thought about a son fighting his father was a pervert. We discussed the two coaches at the junior high down the street. Coach Fry was short but quick. Coach Stuart was tall and strong. Who would win in a fair fight if the principal agreed that neither would lose his job?

Could the University of North Carolina basketball team outrun the University of Georgia football team? Could Dr. Dunn raise Thelma? We discussed the matter with the seriousness of deacons. Things were bad at home. My mother was suffering from nerves because she had heard a rumor that my father was planning to leave her. My father, who had worked for the same textile mill for 20 years, had begun making extra money by modeling the company's jeans and overalls in fashion shows around the North Carolina piedmont. He was asked to model the first time because, although he was overweight, he was less overweight than the rest of the cheap labor in the mill. We went to see him model once at a department store. I was glad Pete and Jake didn't go. My father walked out on a ramp, which was supposed to be a dock. He had Vaseline on his lips so he could smile, but one side of his mouth kept sticking to his front teeth. He got his foot caught in the paper kite he was carrying, and he stepped right through it. But my mother wasn't embarrassed.

Continued →

She kept her eye on the female models, most of whom were fast secretaries from the company's main office.

My father began wearing denim jeans to deacons' meetings. He seemed to pose wherever he was. He gave up his pipe for sissy thin cigars. He asked me to accompany him to the special meeting. I knew he wanted to talk to me on the way. He was lonely, and my mother was making his life unpleasant. I went because the meeting concerned Thelma.

Dr. Dunn wasn't invited. The men agreed to pray for the minister and for Thelma. Fleck Ross, the oldest deacon, led us in an endless prayer. Several deacons prayed on their knees. My father thought about it, then pretended to pick lint from his new denim trousers. Fleck prayed that Thelma might satisfy God's purpose for her life, that she might fit the garments woven for His kingdom. He prayed for Dr. Dunn, that he might continue to bear life's burdens. Someone was laughing, a high-pitched laugh, like the suppressed cries of a jungle bird. Fleck resumed. He prayed that Dr. Dunn might bear life's burdens. He paused again. In the rear of the room sat Fleck's brother Edgar, giggling like a schoolgirl, his hand over his mouth. When my father and I left we could hear merry whispers of ropes and pulleys.

The week before the baptism, during math class, Jake asked an apparently disinterested question about water displacement. A few of us, churchgoers, laughed. But the teacher was so delighted to be asked a question that he didn't mind our noise. Sue, an incorrigible teacher's pet and a member of our church, asked "Are you married, Mr. Wexler?" "Of course he's not married. He's Mr. Wexler," someone said. "No, Sue," Mr. Wexler said with equanimity. "He's just right for Thelma," Pete whispered. "He can figure how to lift her." Such a comment was close enough to sex for us to laugh our deep, masculine laughs. Sue giggled.

Sunday came. We didn't see Dr. Dunn before the service. Someone said that he was in the bullpen warming up. "If he don't do it today, we'll send him back to the minors," a disgruntled old man said. "Yeah, or trade him for a good second baseman," another voice said. "You've got to hand it to him," my father said. "He could wait for tonight, for the evening service." "He's grandstanding," my uncle said. "I hope they taught him something about this in that graduate school of his." Several people snorted.

My mother had decided not to attend the service. This was the first time I'd known her to stay home on Sunday morning.

The service began. Dr. Dunn came in with the deacons. My father had the Sunday off, so we sat together. We sang; we tithed; Dr. Dunn began his sermon. It was good. I remember this as the most uplifting sermon I've ever heard. The invitation hymn seemed to take forever. Dozens of people made professions of faith. The service was over. The choir sang while Dr. Dunn changed for the baptism. During the service Thelma had sat like a sphinx. Now she was mysteriously gone.

Later I realized as I contemplated her empty pew that I had ignored the principal character in this drama. Thelma wasn't much, but she was all her father had left. She worked in the company fabric store because she perspired too much to work in the mill. She attended church; she went home. She lived for some reason unknown to me at the time.

She and Dr. Dunn met in the baptistery. As the curtain opened, the congregation took a deep breath. My father's breathing was labored. He was suffering. A crack team of young aspiring deacons waited to assist. I quickened at my father's side. Life was rich and full. Dr. Dunn and Thelma. My father and mother.

Dr. Dunn raised the handkerchief to Thelma's face. Then he surprised us: before he tried her weight, he raised himself on his toes three times. He took deep breaths. My uncle later said that the breaths were chants. Dr. Dunn plunged Thelma into the water and raised her in one motion. The congregation gasped, the way fans gasp at a missed putt or a goalie's save in hockey. Were we disappointed?

After the service Fleck cornered my father. "Did you see that? It was like, it was like David and Goliath." "But he didn't kill Thelma," my father said. Fleck walked away mumbling, "It was like Samson and Delilah." My father signed.

Pete, Jake, and I had a party that afternoon. It wasn't much of a party, for we weren't supposed to laugh or talk loudly on Sunday. We drank six-ounce Cokes and ate potato chips. We saw Thelma cross the street. Jake and Pete said nothing when we saw my father walk down the street. In his stiff denim jacket he walked and mused. My mother had a headache.

We still get together. Jake teaches mathematics at a high school in Winston-Salem. His seniors each year can expect the course to culminate in an extensive word problem on water displacement. Pete's novel, *The Fat Lady at the Circus*, was published by a small Chapel Hill press. It sold well within the state and received some critical attention. Readers outside the South claimed that the characters were too eccentric.

But Pete can't fool me. I know that his novel is an allegory based on Thelma's baptism. I teach at a junior college in Greensboro. I'm at work on an article on Pete's book. You might ask, "Why should you concern yourself with Pete Draper, a novelist who will be forgotten in two or three years?"

Now we must invent our tension and generate mysteries: Pete in his novel, Jake in his word problems, I in my critical analyses. We live in obscurity. We search; we compete. We wonder when it happened.

*Randy Oakes' work has appeared in **Real Fiction, Pembroke Magazine** and other literary journals. His story, "A Young Republican," appeared in the "Insiders/ Outsiders" issue of **Now and Then.***

WILMA DYKEMAN

an Interview
by Sandra L. Ballard

The distinguished author talks about her writer's sense of place and about some other Appalachian writers present and past.

When I asked Wilma Dykeman to describe the way she "places" herself as a writer, I wanted to know if she would identify herself as a Tennessee writer or a North Carolinian, a novelist, a writer of non-fiction, an Appalachian writer, a Southern writer—or as something else? I should have anticipated her response. She said, "I guess I never have really liked any labels or pigeonholes." She smiled slightly as she crossed her legs and smoothed the skirt of her simple, royal blue linen dress and began a list like a litany: "I am a woman, and I live in the mountains, and I live in the South, and I am an American." She went on to say that whether we attach labels according to these qualities or others—like social class, economics, or religion—the labels all tend to "limit and de-emphasize the central thing—which is that you're just writing and you want to try to communicate your own special vision."

Dykeman's dissatisfaction with labels is one of the reasons she tried different forms of writing. When I had arranged to meet her at the University of Tennessee library, I knew that in this building there were 16 books she had written in addition to a number of books for which she had contributed a chapter or an article.

Her credits include three novels all set in Appalachia—The Tall Woman in 1962, The Far Family in 1966 and *Return the Innocent Earth* in 1973—and a great deal of non-fiction. She has written a volume on a river, *The French Broad* in 1955, on history, *With Fire and Sword: The Battle of Kings Mountain* and *Tennessee: A Bicentennial History* in 1975, as well as other books about the state and the Appalachian region and two collections of essays.

With her husband, James Stokely, she co-authored *Neither Black Nor White* in 1957, which she describes as "an interpretation of the South before every other person had done one." It was a book for which they conducted over 500 interviews across the South. In 1958 it won the Hillman Award for the best book on world peace, race relations or civil liberties.

Later she wrote the biographies of two Southern statesmen who were involved with race relations: *Seeds of Southern Change: The Life of Will Alexander,* which she wrote with her husband in 1962, and *Prophet of Plenty: The First Ninety Years of W.D. Weatherford* in 1966.

She also wrote the biography *Too Many People, Too Little Love: A Biography of Edna Rankin McKinnon* in 1974, about the advocate of birth control and family planning who came to Tennessee with Margaret Sanger in the 1930s.

Wilma Dykeman declared every time she wrote a biography that she would never do another one. But in each case, she explained, "these were people who made me think, if I don't write about their lives they probably won't have a biography, at least not now. Each one of them really did have such a special contribution, and I guess my sense of mission has always been strong."

Her mission carries her into the classroom where she teaches a course in Appalachian Studies at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. These courses began when Dr. John Fisher was the head of the English Department, between 1976 and 1978. She had realized that the largest university in the region did not then have a single course that related to the region. "Now, I don't think it's regionalism," she said, "to know the place where you are. The arts have always, historically, had a great sense of place."

When Dykeman talked with Fisher about several good writers in this region, writers that he did not know, he asked her if she would initiate a course in Appalachian literature. Her first response was to tell him that she didn't have a Ph.D. "Then the next thing I said was I would do it until he found somebody else." That was about 13 years ago.

Knowing the aversion she had expressed to such labels as "Appalachian writer," I asked how she defined "Appalachian literature" for her classes. She laughed, recognizing the contradiction between the language she uses to describe her personal stance and that required in her role as a teacher, and told me her definition: "that which has been written in Appalachia or about Ap-

palachia, or by people who have lived or still live in Appalachia. You don't have to have lived here all your life, and you don't have to have written just about it [the region]. It's anything in the context of Appalachia."

When I asked about the writers she includes in the course, she began by explaining her view of the two traditions out of which Appalachian literature emerged.

She called one "the Sut Lovingood tradition of old Southwestern humor," which began in the 1850s when Knoxville writer George Washington Harris created the uncouth character of Sut Lovingood, a Tennessee mountaineer whose dialect, tall tales and earthy humor have contributed to one stereotype of mountain people. (Sut Lovingood's yarns also influenced the development of such characters as Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn.)

Dykeman called the other tradition the "parlor" school of Mary Noailles Murfree, a native of Murfreesboro, Tenn., who published fiction from the 1880s until 1914 under the pseudonym of Charles Egbert Craddock. Her novels, full of romantic descriptions of the Cumberland and Smoky Mountains and detailed records of mountaineers' odd customs and peculiar speech, contributed to the "local color" tradition, depicting a quaint mountain people. Dykeman believes "these two stereotypes have greatly influenced Appalachian literature. You get John Fox (whose most well-known novels are *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* in 1903 and *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* in 1908) after Mary Murfree, and you begin to get some of the Daisy Mae (characters) after Sut Lovingood. The rest of us are sort of caught between these two stereotypes. But it's interesting to follow them down to the present day."

Of the early writers from the region, Dykeman said, "I am a great admirer" of Emma Bell Miles' *The Spirit of the Mountains* of 1905. "She had very fresh insights that are just as meaningful today as they were at the time she wrote them." And Horace Kephart's *Our Southern Highlanders* of 1913 and 1922 is a classic study that Dykeman likes because of the perspective of "the outsider who comes in and interprets the region."

She mentioned Jesse Stuart, commenting, "I think Jesse Stuart's great contribution was his short stories...of all the thousands of things he wrote."

About James Still, Dykeman remarked, "for years I went around talking about him," recognizing that "there were just very few that knew about his work." Her students often read his novel *River of Earth* and his short stories because they "have really universal themes."

"Then there's Harriette Arnow, of course." She asked my response to *The Weedkiller's Daughter,* Arnow's fourth novel, published in 1970. It was set in Detroit during the 1960s and examined such problems as McCarthyism, the Vietnam War, environmental pollution and civil rights. The novel had received neither the critical nor popular success of Arnow's earlier work, Dykeman believed, because readers had expected another novel set in Kentucky. "It was terrible what happened to her with it. I didn't feel that it should be dismissed at all. (But) too many people felt, 'She has to write another *Dollmaker*,' or, 'She has to write another *Hunter's Horn.*' How unfair of them to put a corset on her this way!"

Dykeman spoke with conviction, blue eyes flashing. She said that readers and critics refused to allow Arnow "to move beyond (her earlier novels) and write about what was happening to people all around her in another place. See, that's why I hate those labels. If she'd been John Updike—he can go to France and then write about France, and people don't say, 'Oh, he isn't writing about the suburbs.' If you've lived in the suburbs of New York, apparently you can be universal enough that you can write about anything."

Dykeman also includes work by Thomas Wolfe and James Agee in her Appalachian literature courses. "It's interesting how in temperament and in their own self-destruction, they are so much alike—and both so much a part of the Appalachian experience in literature, and yet unlike all these other Appalachian writers. But they are very much like each other."

Tennessean Mildred Haun's *The Hawk's Done Gone* of 1941 is another book that Dykeman discusses with her classes. She and her husband had not heard of Haun when they received her book for a wedding present. "It was published the year we were married."

Set in Cocke County where Dykeman has a home, Haun's fiction "looks at the dark side of the moon," Dykeman said. She singled out Haun's use of "the witchcraft and the traditions and the mythology" as "very skillful, very artistic," believing that Haun "really gives that part of it in a way that I think no other writer has. Some of her short stories that are in the larger collection (published by Vanderbilt in 1968) are really horrifying." She added, "It's the oppression of women in her books that's a theme that's really been overlooked." She expressed her desire for somebody to examine this neglected aspect of some of the literature of the region.

With the mention of the "dark side" of literature and life, I wondered about Dykeman's opinion of East Tennessee novelist Cormac McCarthy. She began, "of course, his fiction is so entirely

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Sandy Ballard has a James Still Fellowship this summer to work on her biography of Harriette Simpson Arnow. She will be an assistant professor in the English Department at Carson-Newman College this fall

different from mine—and his whole vision." She admits, however, that she admires his "magic with words," his humor, and his imaginative expression of his personal vision. She believes that "his really dark vision of life is one that balances some of the brighter and more optimistic viewpoints.

"What interests me," she commented, "is the response of some people who see that (dark view) as being more authentic, somehow more vital than another kind of vision that is more affirmative. It seems to me that what literature is all about is to have a number of different views." Dykeman is quick to admit that she recognizes the "dark" elements of life, and she says she welcomes the revelations she can have about them through reading such novels as McCarthy's *Suttree*. She has no objections to McCarthy's fiction. What she objects to is the acceptance of only that dark view of life as being the authentic Southern view.

Much of the graphic violence and exaggerated behavior in Southern fiction, she believes, "grows out of real editorial encouragement to write in this way. The 'Joyce Carol Oates syndrome,' I guess you would call it" results in "book after book after book" featuring experiences that are "not mainstream." Dykeman readily accepts that "we have anguish. We all have anguish—and really dark moments. But, to me, the challenge is to capture those moments that do happen to most people rather than these bizarre ones. The thing that literature needs to do is to let us really share whatever that experience is and relate to it because then we bring something into our own lives from the literature." Dykeman stated with quiet exasperation, "There aren't too many of us who eat the afterbirth of one of our children" (referring to a scene in Oates' work).

In her Appalachian literature classes, she includes a wide range of contemporary writers from the region. In addition to McCarthy, she discusses the works of Lee Smith, Bobbie Ann Mason, Jayne Anne Phillips and Gail Godwin. She added, "You know, (Godwin's) last three novels are set in Asheville." She referred to Nikki Giovanni: "She grew up in Knoxville and some of her poems are about when she lived here."

Fred Chappell is another writer that she thinks "is very, very good." His *Dagon* and *I Am One of You Forever* "seem like two different worlds. He doesn't get just in one mode or one way of reacting to life." Likewise, poet Jim Wayne Miller, she reminded me, "has a novel coming out now."

When I asked about writers of this region who are not getting the attention she would like to see them get, Dykeman shifted in her chair, leaned toward me, and eagerly began with John Ehle. "The *Washington Post* had an excellent review of his novel just before this last one, *The Winter People*, but when you read long essays on Southern literature, he's never mentioned. He's just one of the underestimated writers of the region."

She next thought of Wendell Berry, a writer of poetry, essays, and novels. She described him as an articulate spokesman for the region, with deep "Appalachian concerns," mentioning his work *The Unsettling of America*. "A lot of people know about him," she said, "but he's not nearly recognized as much as he should be.

"Another one that I've been reading is this new young writer Denise Giardina. Do you know her novel *Storming Heaven*? *Now and Then* had a long review of it" (Volume 5, Number 1, Spring, 1988).

Turning to poets, Dykeman thought of Byron Herbert Reece, a Georgian "who follows in the oldest tradition, the ballad tradition. He's the only person I know who, by himself, wrote a ballad as if it had been written by a whole community—which is the way a ballad is supposed to be written." His first book *Ballad of the Bones*, Dykeman said, is "a link between the past and the present in Appalachian poetry."

Dykeman is currently working on a book about Sequoyah, the half-Cherokee inventor of the written Cherokee language. She thinks of him as more than "just a genius." She also revealed that the subject of her "night work and day thinking" is a long novel about which she offered no further details.

As we stood to leave, Dykeman recalled when Bobbie Ann Mason was in Knoxville recently. A headline about Mason's visit had read, "To know your place you have to leave it," and Dykeman understands that sentiment. But she wouldn't want to move to New York. She believes that she has seen enough of the world to have a sense of perspective about the region where she lives.

More disheartening than the New York editors who don't understand why she still lives here, she sighed, are the people *here* who don't understand why she hasn't left. She has traveled widely, she explained, and she finds that one of the most exciting things that can happen is to be in a foreign place and "all of a sudden to have an incredible sense of *deja vu*." To recognize the familiar in the unfamiliar—to understand that universal experience is not limited to a particular region—that is what gives us a genuine sense of place.

Traveler's Rest

When my wife's brother Gem died
Unmarried at age thirty-six,
Dead at the hands of an irate husband,
One woman who would
Have married him
Pillowed his head
Under a wedding dress
She wedged
Into the coffin.
A second woman who
Would have married him
Tried to climb into
The casket with him,
And a third haunted
The room where he
Had lain in state
Until she had to be
Spirited away a week after
His removal to
Traveler's Rest.

—Walter Darrell Haden

Walter Darrell Haden teaches English at the University of Tennessee at Martin, Tenn., and performed with Patsy Cline in a Grand Ole Opry package show in 1962 at Ronald Reagan's high school.

Houses

For my grandmother

He is dead exploded furnace fallen crane.
You buried a man you recognized
from a mended shirt hand sewn pants
You will buy him a tombstone someday.

Dawn crossing the muddy street
Helen hangs on your dress
Stella staggers on five year old feet
Frannie Andy you carry in a bushel
to the first house.

This one is never dirty
but she watches your chapped fingers.
The children are silence in the kitchen corner
eyes wishing at cookies.
You are a scarecrow chasing flying dirt
Torn rags wave in your hands
You wring the gray mop one more time

The brown house always empty of people
you move from floor to floor
singing songs in Polish
This is the house you can look at
till your eyes with the richness
walk through the rooms
pretending you belong here
You collect money from the table
and a new used dress for Helen.

Children planted on the porch.
Perfume dyed hair
painted smiles greet you.
You clean the women's house quickly
changing sheets
praying God is looking somewhere else.
You iron a new dress touch the silk.
They pay you too much
but no one else will work here.

The children give you their gifts
of finely wrapped chocolate.
a trade with the huckster
for potatoes onions

You walk back yards collecting laundry
pull the small wagon of sack boulders home
Stella trails with a pillow case full.
You boil water creating a potion of clean.
You search the sky for sun wind.

You know you are lucky
many jobs work each day
you the children together still
You fall asleep at the table again
finally capturing the face
you can't remember in the day
huddled children at your feet
watching you breathe

—Georgeann Eskievich Rettberg

Georgeann Eskievich Rettberg teaches kindergarten and a fourth and fifth grade poetry workshop for the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Her work has been published in ***Panhandler, Sojourner, Mill Hunk Herald*** *and* ***Now and Then.***

ONE PHOTOGRAPHER'S SENSE O

William Richardson Mullins, who grew up around Wise and Clintwood in Southwest Virginia, started taking pictu
came to be known, traveled through Wise and Dickenson Counties in Virginia and Letcher and Pike Counties in Eas
hiked, and he stayed with people he knew. Up until the middle 30s, when electricity came to the mountains, he deve
lamp covered with a red globe. In the 1940s he moved to Letcher County, Ky., where he spent the rest of his life. H

The photos in this group came from a box of 3,700 negatives that survived a fire that destroyed most of Picturem
Rucker, have worked to preserve the photographer's work. Appalshop has put together a traveling exhibition, "Whe

Bob Henry Baber, who helped put the exhibition together for Appalshop (and also helped *Now and Then* acquire
highly original and dignified interpretations, experimental reportage and poetic vision, but also for what they do not b
quaintness that reeked of chamber of commerce commercialism, or a focus that dwelt almost entirely on negative st
happened to be a brilliant photographer."

The photos on these pages were provided with the generous assistance of Bob Henry Baber, Angel Rucker, and

= PLACE—PICTUREMAN MULLINS

res with a tintype camera when he was 14 years old in 1900. In the 1920s and 30s, Pictureman Mullins, as he tern Kentucky carrying his equipment with him. His was not a fancy operation—he rode a bicycle, walked or hitch-eloped his photographs in a primitive darkroom that consisted of a window with black drapes over it and a kerosene e maintained studios in Payne Gap and East Jenkins until his death in 1969 at the age of 82.

an Mullins' work. Appalshop, the media production center in Whitesburg, Ky., and Mullins' granddaughter, Angel re the Mountain Laurels Bloom," of some 55 photos.

the photos), believes that "Pictureman Mullins' photographs are important not only for their attention to detail, ring. In the past many Appalachian photographs have suffered from either an overbearing sentimentality and ereotypes. Mullins wasn't looking for a 'slant' or 'angle' but was just another member of the community who also

Appalshop staff members Robert Gipe and Scott Oliver.

Lee Smith

an Interview by Pat Arnow

One time in a dentist's office, I started reading a *Redbook* magazine and found myself in the middle of a story crackling with odd, funny characters. The setting was Appalachian, and the writing was far fresher than the shiny new paneling in the waiting room. I looked back to see who wrote this renegade *Redbook* story. Lee Smith.

The first book I read by Lee Smith was *Black Mountain Breakdown,* which was about a girl growing up in Southwest Virginia. It came out in 1980. It was writing I admired: terse, understated, but expansive in its humor. And though it was set in the mountains with some of the people fitting the usual conception of mountain folk, the characters were drawn as individuals, quirky and engaging and irritating. And contemporary. I recognized a voice from my generation. I could have known these people. And I liked reading about a part of the country near my home. It was a pleasure to continue reading Lee Smith's novels as they appeared: *Oral History* in 1983, *Family Linen* in 1985 and *Fair and Tender Ladies* in 1988.

Smith's style continues simple but expressive, her characters continue odd and contemporary, even when she's writing about women of the past in the mountains as she has in *Oral History* and *Fair and Tender Ladies.*

Born in 1944 in Grundy, Va., Smith spent two years in a Richmond prep school and entered Hollins College writing program. Her first novel, *The Last Day the Dogbushes Bloomed* was published in 1967, just after she graduated from college. She also worked as a newspaper reporter in Richmond, Va., and Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Her second novel, *Something in the Wind*, she described in an interview in *American Way* as "just terrible, as second novels often are if they're written too soon." *Fancy Strut*, published in 1973, was her third novel, based on experiences in Tuscaloosa.

In her next novel, *Black Mountain Breakdown*, Smith wrote about her own region for the first time. She describes this as the most autobiographical of her books.

Her short stories have been published in various magazines, have won two O. Henry awards and were collected in *Cakewalk* in 1982.

Smith now lives in Chapel Hill, N.C., with her husband, Hal Crowther, who writes for the North Carolina *Independent*. They have three children between them: Page, 18, Josh, 17 and Amity, 17.

Recently Smith and I talked about how her home has shaped her writing.

Q: One thing I've noticed in your books, you use a lot of folklore. For instance, one of your characters puts an axe under the bed to cut the pain of childbirth. I was wondering where you got this kind of thing.

A: Well, I grew up in Grundy, Va., which is in Buchanan County in Southwest Virginia, and I was an only child, which means that I spent less time with other children and more time listening to old people. Although I was an only child, I had a real big family there. They were all real talkers. We would all get together, I mean we had Sunday dinner at my grandmother's, and then we had all these family picnics at the Breaks Park, and I just heard a whole lot of that stuff.

I lived in town. My father ran the dime store, but there was just one school. And so you go spend the night with people up in hollers.

And my grandfather was in politics for 40 years. He was a treasurer, and my whole family—all of them were into politics in the Democratic party—and I used to love to go with them around politicking where you just go, and you eat on Sundays at about five different houses, convince them to vote for who you want.

And then later, in more recent years, I've gotten interested in reading anything I can get my hands on of recorded folklore, oral history, whatever. It's my big passion.

Q: How are people taking your books up there?

A: Well, I don't know. Nobody ever mentions them hardly. It's real nice.

My mother died last spring. My dad still lives in the house I was born in and grew up in, and since I am an only child, I go back all the time. And so, what I've done for years and years is just write down stuff that interests me when I'm there. There are lots of people I talk to regularly, who tell me stuff. They'll say, "Well, now I've got something else to tell you about, curing such-and-such." But my books don't seem to be an issue.

Q: Oh, so they're not reading them when they come out and getting on you about them?

A: No, no. Everybody's real nice. The English teacher had me come and talk at the high school. I'm going back in May for three days to do stuff in Richlands and Grundy, and around that whole area. Up in Abingdon. I try to be as faithful as I can to the region and to the people.

Q: Do people are come up and say, "Well, that was my sister," or ...

A: No. But what I do, either I make them all up or I put them in whole cloth and everybody knows who they are, but they don't object.

This one book, *Black Mountain Breakdown*, was the one where I did put in a few people, community figures. Everyone would probably know who they were, but they're very lovingly portrayed, which is the way I feel about them. Nobody's ever bothered me about it.

Q: How long have you been in Chapel Hill?

A: I've been in Chapel Hill a long time—16 years. And I've never set anything in Chapel Hill in terms of writing.

Q: Any plans to?

A: No. I don't know why, I mean, I know that a university town is full of stories, too, but they may not be ones I can tell. You can't choose your material so much as it chooses you.

I'm gonna try real hard. I did try real hard with one book, *Family Linen*. I got about as far out of the mountains as Martinsville. I got out to (Interstate) 81.

Q: Are you noticing as you keep coming back to Grundy that there is more homogenized culture?

A: Yeah. I think the first thing that I tried to write which was strictly Appalachian was *Oral History*, and that's because I had a closet full of materials and tapes and books that I found incredibly compelling. I think it was when all the fast food stuff came in on Route 460 around the bend in the river from my parents' house. Suddenly that, and then those big dishes that you see everywhere, and you know that everybody's got TV, and that means that very soon all the kids are going to sound like Dan

Rather. All the stuff with the language is going to be lost.

I suddenly did see this enormous homogenization about, oh, 15 years ago, I guess—or 10 years ago. I had been writing ever since I was a child, but I began to feel like I wanted to record my perceptions of that area. And certain kinds of people because that that was going to be a thing of the past.

Q: Would you say that a 12-year-old in Grundy today is going to have a different voice than yours?

A: Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

Q: Then it won't be much of a mountain voice?

A: Well, I don't think it will be as much of a one, no. My parents were storytelling parents. A lot of people my age who are still in the mountains, only a few of them are consciously into this kind of thing. We just don't sit around and talk like we used to.

Q: You mean that if you do it, it's because you choose to do it? You have to think about it, it doesn't come naturally?

A: Yeah, telling stories down from generation to generation is not any longer a way of life. It still happens in some families because some people care about it. We've all gotten so many of our icons on TV now. I mean the kids are much more likely to get their role models from a TV show than they are from their grandmothers.

Q: Is this a problem with your students? Are you finding it hard to get them to write about their personal experience.

A: Well, no, see, because the students I get, they're already interested in writing. They don't have to be in my class. They're the ones that are predisposed to think about their experience and their families. But the average undergraduate that I encounter when I travel around the country is predisposed to think about how to make money, and that's a whole different kind of thing. I do think there are a lot of elements in our culture that came in with the Reagan years that are anti-history, and anti- a sense of community the way we have known it. There is that materialistic tone and tenor that goes against all that.

I feel like the books that I've written, which are particularly Appalachian books, are the kind of documentation that goes on in Appalachian Studies. I just try to use things the way they were and put them in their context so that anybody that is interested can go there and find them.

Q: I noticed that in the books I was going through this morning.

A: Yeah, there's too much information really, because I'm just fascinated with the way things were and the processes that the people have used, like making soap, and it gets in the way of the narrative. But I just love it. I'm fascinated with all of that.

Q: Do you think of yourself as an Appalachian writer particularly?

A: Yeah.

Q: I've heard you called a Southern writer.

A: There's a huge difference between a Southern writer and the kind of writer I am. For one thing, so much of what I think of as the canon of Southern literature does have to do with race and racial guilt. I'm talking about Eudora Welty or William Faulkner. I mean, we just don't have that. Or at least when I was growing up, I just didn't have a sense of that. And also, I never had a sense of an aristocracy. You know, there was nobody with big columns on their house, with lots of money or black mammies.

I just don't think of myself as a Southern writer. I really don't, because the class system was so different, the money situation was so different, even. Well, just the whole social structure was quite different, I think, from the deep South. I have spent some time—I lived in Alabama and was married for a while to a man from Mississippi. I see it as very different.

The family roles are different. There's not much similarity between a novel that comes out of Appalachia and a novel that comes out of the South.

Q: So you're seeing this is a distinctive region.

A: I think so. People who are not from the South maybe find it harder to understand the delineation because it all sort of sounds the same to them, but it's not the same—even the language is different.

And it is quite different. I think of Fred Chapell as an Appalachian writer. I think of Bobbie Ann Mason.

Q: Though she's from Western Kentucky.

A: Yeah, but still it's the same kind of language. It's got the same sound. It's the same kind of people.

Q: Do you have any trouble gaining acceptance from the mainstream kind of publishing and audiences?

A: No. I've been lucky, though. I was lucky because I started writing at a time when it was a lot easier to get published than it is now. I have students who are having trouble getting what I think are wonderful novels or stories published, or having them come out and having them not receive attention. It's just the whole cultural situation. It's just much tougher now than it was almost 20 years ago when I started publishing.

Q: And Appalachia was a little more trendy then, too, wasn't it?

A: Actually, the first things I did were not specifically Appalachian. They were just sort of, oh, "young-person-finds-her-way-in-the-world." They were typical first-writer things. It was just that, I wish I could get the statistic exact, but there's something like 70 percent less fiction, serious fiction, being published now than there was then.

Q: Even in magazines?

A: Oh, yeah. Especially in magazines. It's real hard to get serious fiction published today because there's almost no place that will publish it. You know, everything's gotten generic and tacky and non-fiction-filled. That's why I'm so pleased to see the growth of regional presses, so that some of our young writers will get published.

I have been real lucky. There are a lot of people who like to read about a time that doesn't exist any more. You know, all these people in their New York apartments are listening to Garrison Keillor, and sometimes they'll write me a letter or two—people I would think would never read anything that I've written. And they like it. I think that a lot of people are feeling put off by the way they live, the place they live at and their dislocation. So I don't think that being a regional writer automatically cuts you off from a mass market.

Q: You don't think publishers are feeling any kind of pressure?

A: Oh hell no. They love regional stuff. They love Southern stuff. The problem is that they just publish so few titles in serious fiction, period. It's much easier, I think, to get a novel published if it's a good regional novel, today, right now, in New York, than if it's a good novel about life in New York.

Look at *Lonesome Dove*, Larry McMurtry's book. I mean people do like to read about small towns in regional states. I don't think that that's a drawback at all right now for the young writer.

Q: Are you continuing to write about the past now, or are you going to work on some contemporary themes?

A: I seem to be writing some stories right now, so I suppose the next thing that I would have out would be some kind of a collection of stories, and they are more contemporary and less rooted in place than *Fair and Tender Ladies*, which was my last novel. I do worry that I'll get stuck and not be able to write anything else except from a first-person woman's voice of 50 years ago in Buchanan County because that's what I'm most comfortable with. So I'm trying real hard now to write some stories that are contemporary.

Q: I was talking about doing this interview, and one person said she was not disturbed about the sameness of your times and places, but was bothered that all the protagonists seem to be good-looking blonde or red-headed women. She said, "Ask her why they always have to be good-looking."

A: Well, that's interesting. I don't know. The writer is the last to know. I mean I have absolutely no idea. But tell her that I'll write a plain one immediately!

Q: A Jane Eyre type.

A: Right, exactly.

Q: O.K., I'll pass that along. So, you're trying some different kinds of stories?

A: Yes. When you're writing a lot, which I do, you just don't stop to think what you're up to, because you're just compelled to do what you do. But several people have mentioned to me— friends, not critics particularly—that why don't I write about men more, that I seem to write entirely about women. I'm working on that. I'm going to consciously have at least half of them from the point of view of men. It's like these

pretty red-headed women. I do think that you can fall into patterns. That's one of the big problems with American writers; we tend to write the same stories over and over. And I don't want to do that. So, with the stories that I'm writing now, I'm gonna follow my face some. I just sent my agent one of them, and she called me yesterday and said, "What the hell is this!" Because I don't want to do the same thing. It's hard not to. Usually you get a thing that you know how to do, and you're tempted to keep doing variations on it. I mean, Hemingway wrote one book, right? Which is a problem in American writing, I think. More so than elsewhere.

Q: I read about *Fair and Tender Ladies* that it was inspired by picking up a packet of letters from a garage sale.

A: Yes. It was a flea market, actually, in Greensboro.

Q: I was wondering if you actually used any of those?

A: No, because they were not Appalachian, for one thing. And I had this whole body of stuff I wanted to use. And so I wanted to have my writer be set there. But I was struck. They were from a woman to her sister, and she was a woman who had not had any particular education. I was just struck how every now and then she'd have this real literary image, or striking turn of phrase or something. And I just got real interested in the idea of somebody's letters being a sort of work of art. You know, letters over their whole lifetime. Is it art because there's a critic somewhere who perceives it as art? Or, is it art because it just is? I don't know. It's just some sort of aesthetic thing that I've had in my mind for a while that interests me.

And I have felt that there are a lot of other interesting stories in issues having to do with women and our creativity in particular. I think there's less of an emphasis upon the end product in the artistic work that women do, so often the process is what's important rather than the product. It's why in that book I was trying to show that the writing of the letters was more important than the letters. It's like the knitting of a sweater, the making of the quilt, and that kind of thing, you know, that something is art even though it's not perceived as public art. It's the difference between monumental sculpture and needlepoint.

Q: One is considered fine art and one's like folk art.

A: Yeah. I read this wonderful book recently of art criticism by two women and they point out in it that we all use the term "old masters." Where are the "old mistresses?" (The book is *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology* by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock.)

Q: Well, they were making quilts.

A: That's right. Or they were painting miniatures. You know, they were encouraged to do pastels, miniatures and portraits as opposed to big huge things. And (there's the issue of) where you do it. Do you do it in your studio with apprentices, or do you do it at home?

Another thing I had in mind with *Fair and Tender Ladies*, I had the enormous pleasure some years ago of coming upon Lou Crabtree in a class that I taught in Abingdon, and she had been at that time writing for 50 years. She read this thing in class, and it just knocked me out. I said, "Do you have any more stuff?" And she said, "Why, yeah," and she came in the next day with a suitcase full of this stuff that she'd been writing and writing and writing. I was just so stunned by the idea of writing not for publication, but writing as Flannery O'Connor has said as a "habit of being." Her book, *Sweet Holler: Stories*, was published by LSU (Louisiana State University Press) with a lot of those things in it.

Q: It was interesting in *Fair and Tender Ladies*, this woman got herself trapped and couldn't do anything else. The letters were her creative outlet maybe. If she had come out of it and gotten published, it would have seemed less true to me. Even though Lou Crabtree actually did. But it's true that someone that talented could get that trapped.

A: Well, I think it happens all the time. All the time.

Q: It probably happens to men as well.

A: Of course it does. But you do have to write about what you know about, and I know more about women and their psychology at different points in their lives than men.

Q: Do you call yourself a feminist?

A: Yeah. I do. Although I have not been as actively political as I would like to have been. Oh, yeah, definitely am.

Q: What kind of stories are you doing now?

A: Well, the ones I'm trying to do right now are not specifically Appalachian. I'm looking at one right now which is about a young couple in Raleigh. But it's not the academic environment, which I just cannot seem to deal with.

Q: Do you read work about academic environments?

A: I read pretty much everything I can get my hands on.

Q: But that's not something you'd care to write about?

A: There's things that I'd like to read about, but then when I get ready to write my characters seem to be not in academia. I have also been accused, in addition of not writing about men, of being anti-intellectual. I don't know. You just have to write about whatever compels you, I think, to do any kind of decent job at it. Otherwise, it's artificial.

Q: At Raleigh, do you just teach writing courses?

A: Well, I teach other stuff, too. Various kinds of literature, which I have no business doing. You know, I don't have a Ph.D. or anything. I'm going to be in Virginia next year, though, at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond just doing a visiting year.

Q: Any chance you might come back to the mountains at some point?

A: Yeah, I'd really like to do that.

Q: To teach, or to live?

A: Either or both.

A Country Summer

Lance Olsen

The rattlesnakes near Frenchburg went blind in July because of the heat and made their way into the open. Orva Radcliff told us she found one, dark gold, burnt almond stripes, six horny segments the color of coconuts on its tail, wrapped around several of the 24 empty Coke bottles she had neatly stacked on the backporch. Wynn was in the fields with the cattle when Orva found it, so she had to hoe it herself. The body wouldn't stop moving when she severed the head. It just kept coming at her. She cut it in two and the two parts kept coming. Finally she locked herself in the farmhouse and waited for Wynn to return, which he did two hours later. He ran in the front door and ran out the back, loading his shotgun as he went, and broke three empty bottles when he opened fire, but he killed all four parts of the snake which were still coiling around themselves searching for their severed head. Shortly after that, Simson Bailey discovered a pair of rattlers loving in the trunk of his Pontiac, and Sarah Smallwood patted her pillow before bed and a baby one, no more than eight inches long, quickly slithered out and plocked onto the floor and would have reached the bathroom except that Daisy, Sarah's dog, snapped it up. The Rooney boy stuck his foot in his shoe one morning and got stung by a wasp with one head and two bodies, and the Clarence girl claimed she saw a flying saucer one night over Ned Donahue's pasture and a week later she was pregnant although she said she didn't know who the father was.

It wasn't a good summer for us. These were bad signs. We should have taken more notice of them. We should have taken more precautions. But in all fairness somehow such events only make sense when you're looking back at them from a very long distance. Close up they look like nothing more than a jumble of bad luck.

Then Drusilla Rawlins and her daughter Bobbie Rae stopped going to church. We thought maybe they had gone to Cincinnati to visit Drusilla's sister, Agnes, who owned a very nice beauty parlor and believed the world was going to end in 1999 when people from Atlantis would show themselves on Christian television stations. But Drusilla and Bobbie Rae began appearing in Frenchburg, buying groceries at Piggly Wiggly, and we began to worry.

Granger, Drusilla's husband, died five summers before of a heart attack while trying to free the carcass of a squirrel he had shot which had gotten stuck between two branches of a birch tree. Halfway up Granger missed his footing and started falling backward. To steady himself, he hugged the tree. But his feet had gone out from under him and down he slid, chafing his arms and legs. At the bottom he dusted himself off and began to holler. He wrestled with the tree. He punched it. He kicked it. He punched it again. He threw a powerful and beautiful left hook and a large blood vessel leading into his heart popped, and he died instantly. He was 47 and had lost all his teeth when he was 33 because of a gum disease.

Drusilla didn't take Granger's death well. "My husband," she would tell us, "was a fool for dying for a squirrel." The same gum disease had also taken all of her teeth. She was four years Granger's senior and the tip of her nose almost touched the tip of her chin, and she never smiled because she said she didn't see any point to it. Shortly after Granger's death she began talking against marriage and against squirrel hunting. She told us she even went so far as to write to the Surgeon General of the United States whom she had seen on *Good Morning America* and explained to him marriages should come with the same warning labels as cigarettes and other household poisons. We never saw her letter though, and Drusilla claimed the Surgeon General never bothered to respond to it.

Drusilla also locked her 16-year-old daughter, Bobbie Rae, in the cabin on Amos Ridge with her and vowed she would never let Bobbie Rae marry.

"It isn't worth it," Drusilla said. "It's like having a cat. You keep it and feed it and love it for 16 years just so in the end it'll turn round and die on you and cause you no end of grief. No thank you."

Bobbie Rae said she didn't find any problem with this. She was good-looking, possessed large brown eyes, strong muscular legs and blond hair which she put in curlers every night and nine years of schooling, but she did what her mother told her because she didn't see much reason to do otherwise.

"Why marry when you can be happy instead?" she once asked our preacher, Jesse Vinson, who was also our postmaster.

"Because God likes it that way," Jesse said.

"It seems awful strange for me for a fella to go round heaping marriage on others like a load of rocks when he ain't even married himself," Bobbie Rae said.

"I just haven't found the right person yet," Jesse said.

"I'm talking about God," Bobbie Rae said.

Jesse stopped by the cabin every Tuesday and Thursday for the next three weeks during the dog days and had long conversations with Drusilla and Bobbie Rae about God's will and the nature of marriage.

Bobbie Rae, Jesse told us, served him lemonade over ice, and she and Drusilla sat listening politely to what he had to say. When he was done, Drusilla would sit thinking for several moments then clear her throat and say: "It must be a whole bunch easier to talk about things you've never done than to actually have to trouble your head over doing them." Bobbie Rae would point out that Jesus never married which, she maintained, had to say something about something. Then they would all look at each other for a while longer, Drusilla never smiling, and Jesse would eventually stand and shake their hands and bow slightly from the waist and excuse himself. He gave up on them after the second week in August and they gave up on him after the third.

When Rita Pearl Thornton, who worked the cash register at Piggly Wiggly and whose son was in the Army and flew helicopters in Panama, asked Bobbie Rae one day how she was getting along, Bobbie Rae said: "I been better." Rita Pearl told us Bobbie Rae looked a little under the weather. Her eyes didn't sparkle as much as they used to, and bluish circles spread beneath them. Her skin looked cottony. But Drusilla, coming up behind her, said: "We're gettin' by."

At least to a certain extent we figured that must be true. Drusilla had Granger's Social Security and GI benefits coming in, after all, and Ruben Smallwood said he could hear a rifle going off sometimes from over by the Rawlins' cabin, and he assumed maybe Drusilla and Bobbie Rae were taking up hunting again. Harlan Forrest said he saw them down by the pond near Ned Donahue's pasture once, only they weren't swimming. Drusilla was standing knee deep in the water, fishing, and Bobbie Rae was sitting on a boulder, staring off at nothing in particular as though she was waiting for someone. When Harlan called hello, neither of them answered. Bobbie Rae lazily looked over her shoulder at him and turned away again, but Harlan said it was startling how much her cheeks had sunken. That was the last anyone saw of Drusilla and Bobbie Rae until October.

The rattlesnakes gained back their eyesight early in September when the heat weakened. By that time Wynn Radcliff had shot 24 of them in his field and Sarah Smallwood had found six under her pillow and told us she could no longer dream at night, and the Clarence girl was sent to Grassy Lick, Tenn., to live with her aunt and uncle until next autumn. The summer had been dry, and many of the streams had stopped flowing, and many of the ponds had shrunk, and there wasn't a puddle in sight. Some people were of the opinion Frenchburg was being punished. Jesse Vinson said that was just so much hogwash, but he did start holding special rain-prayer meetings after he closed up the post office on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The birds, driven wild by the need for moisture, began committing suicide by flying into the sides of barns and houses. One evening Ivy Dorough, who turned one hundred and twelve last April and who many people claim was 78 when she was born, called Sheriff Rabel saying someone was trying to break into her cabin. When the sheriff showed up half an hour later he found the bodies of 14 cardinals scattered on the grass outside her bedroom window. Their beaks had been crushed and many of their wings had been broken. Next morning Malvina and Ardell Thompson reported finding a pile of over 50 robins frying on the tin roof of their tobacco barn and Collin and Judy Ann Waterman discovered the carcasses of mockingbirds, wood thrushs and meadow larks floating in the green scummy water at the bottom of their cistern. Turtles, chocolate shells speckled with apricot and burnt orange, crawled into the middle of roads, attempting to be hit by cars.

When Drusilla appeared in Piggly Wiggly again, Bobbie Rae wasn't with her. It was the first time we had seen Drusilla alone since July 4, 1955, when she was standing outside the tent housing the two-headed calf exhibit at the Mount Sterling Country Fair, a full set of teeth in her mouth, nibbling at a huge pink swirl of cotton candy and listening to Wilgus and the Mountain Men singing Mac Wiseman's "I Wonder How the Old Folks Are at Home" on a stage 50 feet away. She took pleasure in the damp acrid scent of hay and dung and beer and tobacco in the air. She ate her cotton candy and listened to the chickens cackling and the girls laughing and the midget with no ears shouting about the real live 30-foot South American python he had in his tent, and Drusilla watched young couples stroll past hand-in-hand, children licking red and white and blue lollipops as large as their heads, old farmers in baggy faded overalls and white t-shirts examining the most modern machinery in various exhibits. Into her field of vision drifted a kid, no more than 18, with the tightest black jeans she had ever seen and a black t-shirt and a pack of cigarettes rolled up in his right shirtsleeve. His blond hair was greased straight back, and he wore snakeskin boots. Drusilla's palms began sweating instantly when he stepped up to her and asked if she wanted to see the Amazing Tasmanian Prophet's Head.

That was Granger Rawlins from over in Camargo, and that was love. They paid 25 cents and went in. Sure enough, in a roped-off area stood a table over which was draped a crimson sheet on which rested a silver platter. On the platter rested a small head in a pool of blood that looked suspiciously like

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Lance Olsen commutes between Lexington, where he teaches at the University of Kentucky, and his cabin in the mountains of Menifee County.

catsup. Its green eyes were wide open and alert. It had no ears. It smiled at Drusilla and Granger. Drusilla yelped and unthinkingly took hold of Granger's arm.

"Your wish, oh great ones, is my command," said the head in a high-pitched nasal voice with an accent that was, from what Drusilla could figure, somewhere between French and Chinese.

Granger studied the head a full minute, his eyes slits, then slapped himself on his thighs and said: "Shee-it. That ain't nothing but the little fella that was yakking outside about the big snake from the South Pole."

"Oh great ones," the head said, "you must be mistaken."

"The hell I am," Granger said. "You want a mistake? I'll show you a mistake."

He reached into his back pocket, pulled out his Swiss Army knife, unfolded the blade, and let it fly.

The knife landed blade-backward a foot wide of the mark and bounced off the table but it had the desired effect.

The head yowled and dropped through the platter, only to appear a moment later attached to a very angry midget yelling, "Hey buddy, fuck you!"

Drusilla laughed so hard she lost her breath. Granger was the funniest man she had ever met. He had to lead her outside and sit her down on a haywagon for a few minutes before she could speak again. When she finally opened her mouth, she found it was filled with six words.

"Will you marry me, Granger Rawlins?" she asked matter-of-factly.

Granger said he couldn't see why not, and six months later Jesse Vinson's father, Hank, wedded them. Three months after that Drusilla gave birth to a dead baby boy with his umbilical cord wrapped around his neck who had never even had a chance to cry. Drusilla and Granger stopped touching each other, thinking it bad luck, and it took six years before they felt up to trying again. This time they had a large healthy boy they named Wilgus, after Wilgus and the Mountain Men.

Ten years later, shortly after listening to a particularly energetic bluegrass band called The Grant Lick Boys at the Frenchburg Mountain Days Fair, they went behind Sammy's Car Lot which later burned down and conceived Bobbie Rae who grew up quiet and dreamy and indifferent to the world. Bobbie Rae sat for hours by herself, staring into space from her bedroom window or the porch rocker. If Granger and Drusilla weren't careful Bobbie Rae slept 14 hours a day, and in school she often dozed off at her desk. When the teacher, Mrs. Barnett, who had no pinkie on her right hand, asked Bobbie Rae if she felt all right Bobbie Rae said she was feeling just fine, but she didn't see any reason to stay awake when there was nothing special to stay awake for.

When he was 16, Wilgus married a girl over in Jeffersonville and moved into his own cabin, but Bobbie Rae never showed any interest in such things. When other girls began to think about boys, Bobbie Rae sat waiting until it was time to go to sleep. When other girls talked about going to junior high, Bobbie Rae said she'd had enough of education. Sometimes to get her moving Granger would take her hunting with him. One Sunday afternoon five years ago they went in search of a couple of squirrels for burgoo. They hiked down into the woods at the foot of Amos Ridge and before long found a squirrel perched on a high branch in a birch. Granger carefully took aim with his .22 and fired. The squirrel fell but its carcass wedged itself between two branches and Granger had to climb for it while Bobbie Rae sat on a boulder and played with her hair. Shortly after that Drusilla locked Bobbie Rae in the cabin and vowed she would never let Bobbie Rae marry.

"You can't win a pissing contest against skunks." Drusilla said.

When she appeared in Piggly Wiggly without Bobbie Rae, we knew something was wrong and that we should have done something a long time ago. Rita Pearl Thornton, who worked the cash register, asked Drusilla as casually as could be how Bobbie Rae was getting on and Drusilla said, "She ain't feeling so good."

"I'm sorry to hear that," Rita Pearl said. "Is there anything we can do?"

Drusilla carefully counted out her money and put in on the counter.

"Naw," she said, "it's just she's sleeping a lot lately."

"You think the doctor ought to have a look at her?" Rita Pearl asked.

"It ain't a big thing," Drusilla said. "Bobbie Rae is always sleeping."

"Well, you let us know if there's anything we can do," Rita Pearl said.

"I sure will," Drusilla said, and she hoisted up her groceries, turned, and walked out.

The rains came a few days later. The weather cooled, and the sky swelled and turned the color of a rabbit's neck. The trees shrunk and turned the color of pumpkins and lemons. The rain stung into the earth for weeks on end. Streams frothed orange, ponds filled and overflowed, waterfalls jetted over limestone. Jesse Vinson said our prayer meetings on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays had worked. The birds ceased committing suicide and began flying south. The turtles crawled back into the woods. On the last Saturday in October a terrible thunderstorm broke loose, the sky rumbling and flashing and the wind so strong it knocked down power lines all along Amos Ridge.

Next day two Rural Electric Company men knocked on the door of the Rawlins' cabin. It was still drizzling. They had been going from house to house, checking and repairing the lines. It took so long for someone to answer, at first they assumed no one was home. But as they turned to leave Drusilla opened the door.

Inside it was dark and moist. All the shades had been drawn. A scent of pine and mildew and old cooking hung in the air. The men had to squint and wait several seconds before they could make out the rose-shaded lamp in the corner, the dresser with all its drawers open and clothes spilling out next to the wood-burning stove, the chairs and

sofa covered in a faded rose material, the lace doily spread across the rickety end table on which sat a hand mirror with a tarnished silver handle and back, a turtleshell hairbrush, a Swiss Army knife. Drusilla escorted them to the bedroom where the fusebox was, and as they entered a smell of decay and dampness met them. They saw the worn blue jeans and red and white checkered blouse and small bra carefully folded over the chair next to the wall inside the doorway. They saw the torn tennis shoes and socks glowing whitely on the floor beneath the chair. They saw the breakfast tray on the side table, its plate of bacon and eggs, its bowl of cereal, its glass of orange juice still untouched.

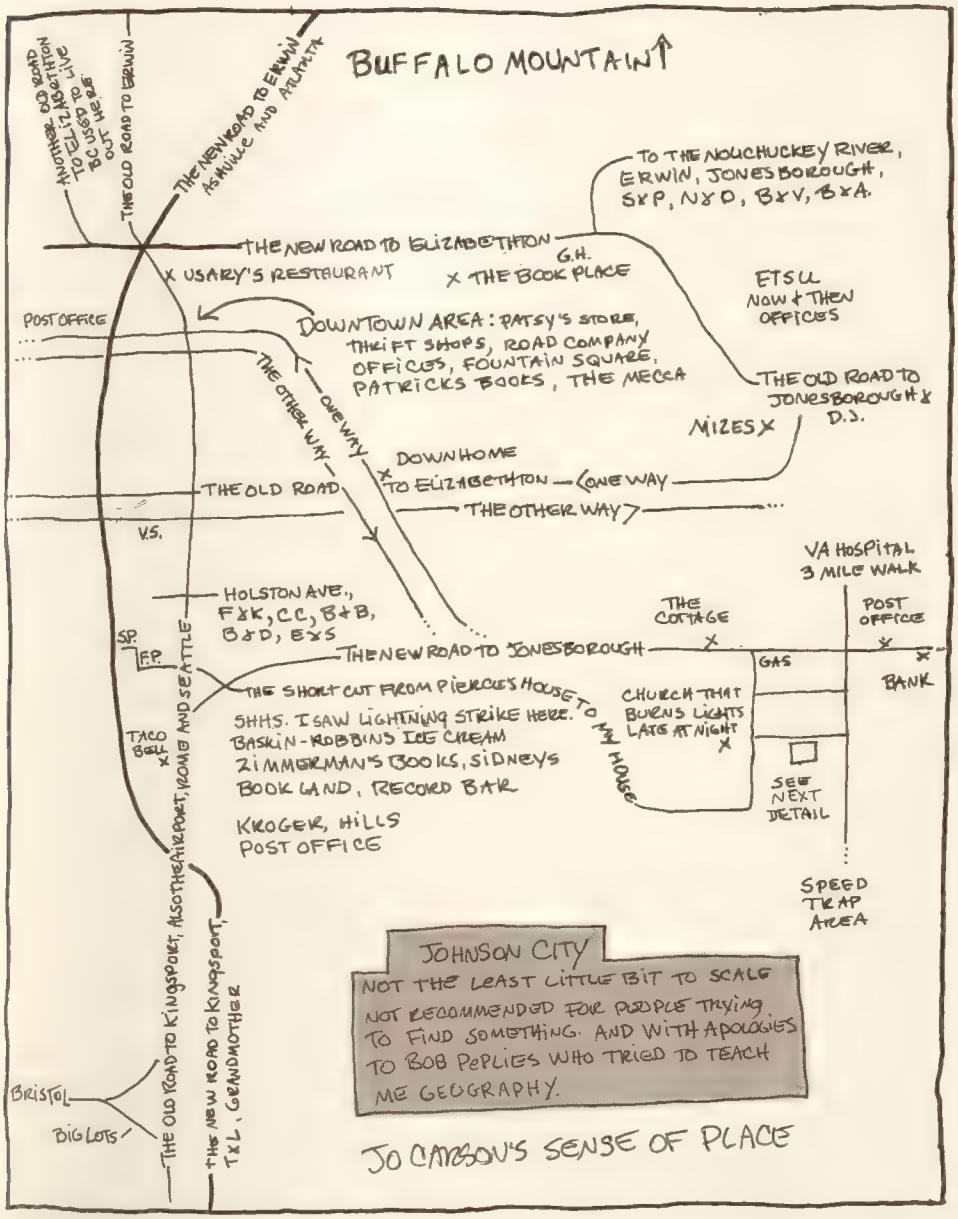
Bobbie Rae lay on her back in bed, naked, eyes closed, hands folded across her bloated belly, a grin on her face where her lips had begun to tighten away from her teeth. Her skin was black, and several wisps of her blond hair had fallen onto the pillow beside her head. When one of the men reached out to touch her wrist, it caved in.

"Shush now," Drusilla said behind him. "Don't you go and wake her."

The man stepped back and turned and looked at his partner without expression, figuring. Then he looked back once more at Bobbie Rae, and the golden glint on her left hand caught his attention. He stared at it for a moment, then at the grinning face.

Then he and his partner said they needed to check the lines outside and said goodbye and left to fetch the coroner.

Jo Carson Traces Her Routes #2


BUFFALO MOUNTAIN
THE NEW ROAD TO ERWIN
THE OLD ROAD TO ERWIN
TO THE NOLICHUCKEY RIVER, ERWIN, JONESBOROUGH, SXP, NXD, BXV, BXA.
THE NEW ROAD TO ELIZABETHTON
G.H.
X USARY'S RESTAURANT
X THE BOOK PLACE
ETSU NOW & THEN OFFICES
POST OFFICE
DOWNTOWN AREA: PATSY'S STORE, THRIFT SHOPS, ROAD COMPANY OFFICES, FOUNTAIN SQUARE, PATRICKS BOOKS, THE MECCA
THE OTHER WAY
ONE WAY
THE OLD ROAD TO JONESBOROUGH X D.J.
MIZES X
DOWNHOME
TO ELIZABETHTON — ONE WAY
THE OLD ROAD
THE OTHER WAY
V.S.
VA HOSPITAL 3 MILE WALK
HOLSTON AVE., FXK, CC, B&B, BXD, EXS
THE COTTAGE
POST OFFICE
S.P.
F.P.
THE NEW ROAD TO JONESBOROUGH
GAS
BANK
THE SHORT CUT FROM PIERCE'S HOUSE TO SEATTLE
SHHS. I SAW LIGHTNING STRIKE HERE.
BASKIN-ROBBINS ICE CREAM
ZIMMERMAN'S BOOKS, SIDNEY'S BOOKLAND, RECORD BAR
KROGER, HILLS
POST OFFICE
CHURCH THAT BURNS LIGHTS LATE AT NIGHT
MY HOUSE
SEE NEXT DETAIL
TACO BELL
SPEED TRAP AREA
JOHNSON CITY
NOT THE LEAST LITTLE BIT TO SCALE
NOT RECOMMENDED FOR PEOPLE TRYING TO FIND SOMETHING. AND WITH APOLOGIES TO BOB PEPLIES WHO TRIED TO TEACH ME GEOGRAPHY.
BRISTOL
BIG LOTS
THE OLD ROAD TO KINGSPORT, ALSO THEATRE PORT, ROME AND SEATTLE
THE NEW ROAD TO KINGSPORT, TXL, GRANDMOTHER
JO CARSON'S SENSE OF PLACE

Seasonal Pig

Fast is pig in winter
Going full-tilt for the barn
And its smell of fresh straw
And a promise of hot mash.

Pig in spring is fast
Clearing up the first green
As soon as it appears.
It won't gain on him.

Pig in summer is fast:
Roots up yellow jackets,
Sees the vet coming with
Hog-snare and tusk-cutters.

But slow is pig in autumn
Stepping through the woods
Toward the barn, more or less,
After the acorns have fallen.

—J. B. Goodenough

J.B. Goodenough is a Kentucky-born New Englander recently transplanted to Pittsburgh. Her first collection of poems, ***Dower Land,*** *was released in 1984 by the Cleveland State University Poetry Center, and her second collection is due within the year from the St. Andrews Press in North Carolina. One of the things she left behind when she moved was a pet pig.*

Here & Elsewhere

Views of Regionalism from writers

Gurney Norman, Lexington, Kentucky
Lou Crabtree, Abingdon, Virginia
Joe Bruchac, Greenfield Center, New York
Linda Hogan, Idledale, Colorado
Penelope Schott, Griggstown, New Jersey
High Nissenson, New York, New York

by Fred Waage

A number of years ago, visiting California where I had once lived, my wife and I attended an open poetry reading in Los Angeles. Comments and responses from the group followed each reading. We were amazed to be described and criticized as writers of bitter, harsh and cynical "New York" poetry. I had not realized that I was a New York poet. I grew up in Upstate New York, a far different region, to me, than New York City. But to the California audience, New York was all one big homogeneous dangerous place (I remember being phoned in Johnson City, Tenn., by a scholar from Harvard who wondered if I'd mind dropping over to Memphis to examine some archives at Memphis State for him).*

Later, living in New Jersey, I sent to a well-known San Francisco literary magazine some poems I had written when drunk in San Francisco sidewalk cafes. They were returned with the comment that they were "definitely not San Francisco." Good poems they were not, but with this heritage how could they not be "San Francisco?"

As an immigrant to Appalachia myself, meditating on such matters and having recently (Fall, 1987) arranged a series of writers' residencies entitled "Regionalism and Inspiration" at East Tennessee State University through a grant from the Literature Division of the National Endowment for the Arts, I became conscious of the complexities of "regionalism" as a concept in the U.S. today. My own experience of being painted in different regional colors revealed the subjectivity of perception underlying any individual's use of the concept.

One of the purposes of the "Regionalism and Inspiration" residencies was to discover how various writers might distinguish their own regions from "elsewhere," and to find relationships between Appalachian regionalism and other concepts of regionalism. From interviews and readings given by these writers, a sense of several directions emerged.

The two native Appalachians in the group, Kentucky writer Gurney Norman and Virginia writer Lou Crabtree, seemed to propound in different ways the sense of Appalachia's uniqueness. Crabtree, author of a highly-acclaimed short story collection about Southwest Virginia, *Sweet Hollow* (published by Louisiana State University in 1984), made a close connection between the Appalachian children, who figure in so many of her stories, and the region as a whole. Both, she believes, are pure and innocent, less in contact than many others with the negative features of our society.

By contrast, Norman, whose best-known work is the novel *Divine Right's Trip*, chronicling a young man's flight from Appalachia to a negative elsewhere and his return to home, seems to locate regionalism in consciousness more than in social behavior. Norman believes we all identify with a collective American experience. He gives as an example the emotional reactions across the country to the Challenger space shuttle explosion.

Not that Crabtree, as a regional advocate, rejects or excludes non-Appalachian experience from her thought or work; on the contrary. The "Jake Pond," which in *Sweet Hollow* is the small region

* *Toronto is closer to Johnson City than Memphis.*

containing the larger Appalachian region, also contains the whole world: "With the cycle of seasons came the cycles of birth, of life, of death, for each of the creatures, as the book of life opened and closed around the pond." Her current project is a story called "The Village," with very specific inhabitants, but this specifically described place is not in Southwest Virginia or any other named region. She is purposely not identifying it geographically, so that it can be where the reader wants it to be.

She strongly criticizes the use of the term "regional" as "insulting" and a dirty word when applied to Appalachia by non-natives. Regionalism applies to all writers. On the other hand, she does find qualities of character here that are unique, and, she feels, superior to those of elsewhere. In particular she cites closeness of feeling for family, a strong work ethic and a desire for achievement, which results in a capacity for survival greater than that of other people. Of course, everyone seeks to survive; but only Appalachians have the personal qualities that can insure it. In a nuclear war the Appalachian land and people would survive, she believes.

One might ask if these personal qualities actually *do* survive distinctively in our constantly diversifying area. Crabtree admits their vulnerability. She laments the industrialization of Appalachia and the diminution of an agrarian lifestyle. The growth of factories and decline in self-sufficiency creates a destructive dependency on outside powers. If the factories close, destitution will soon follow.

Gurney Norman locates the Appalachian region more internally. So, while proclaiming its uniqueness, he does not consider it as vulnerable as Crabtree does. Norman feels the artist (and presumably everyone else) must embrace and accept the technological unification of this time in history. But for him technology cannot replace the persistent human need for spiritual communication. As an illustrative parable, he recounts his experience floating down the Cumberland River with photographic equipment as part of a film crew. He—and the others—were so obsessed with their technological task that they weren't prepared for the river's rapids. Lost in an "electronic wonderland," he capsized and nearly drowned. This distancing, says Norman, is the threat posed by technology. Thus, the essence of regionalism is identity with the natural world of a particular physical space. The challenge to the artist is to employ distancing forms of communication (e.g., print or film), paradoxically to bring people closer to nature and to the "original mind" mythical and sacred consciousness, "to put our minds on the natural world as a way to recover our minds."

There is a closeness between the qualities Crabtree finds in Appalachian children and those Norman locates in a redeemed consciousness. But Norman does not reject outside powers in his artistic quest. In fact, his main concern now is the Ohio River Watershed Arts Media Project—an attempt to increase communication between artists and inhabitants of this region through the unifying power of modern technology. Norman defines the Ohio river watershed—his chosen region—purely geographically, without distinguishing between expressions of diversity within it—most significantly between urban and rural areas. It stretches from Pittsburgh to Memphis. His purpose here is to communicate the commonality of region without impinging on the freedom in diversity. Through such communication he feels the possibility of reviving meaningfulness in the question, "What is Appalachia?"—by recovering the mythical or primal sense of place buried beneath contemporary empty stereotypes.

Despite the similarity of their vision of the Appalachian region, Crabtree and Norman vary greatly in where they locate it. For Crabtree it is here, surviving, but threatened. For Norman it is lost, waiting to be found through the enlightened use of what to Crabtree are the powers of its enemy.

Native American writers Linda Hogan and Joseph Bruchac take ethnic identity as the main factor in their senses of regionalism. Bruchac's native space in northeast New York State and his Indian heritage attached to that space are central to his work.

He believes that American Indians cannot be considered the only true natives of any U.S geographical region simply because of primacy. Anyone who stays on and works with his/her earth—for example, the Appalachian small farmer—is native to his/her region. All are opposed to the non-native, who considers the earth as a commodity rather than a sacred space.

For Bruchac, literary regionalism is truth telling, "writing out of what you know." His regionalism is a high virtue in writing, not a condescending epithet. Unlike the two previous writers, he accepts it as an attribute only of those who are natives in his sense (though that term is potentially applicable to anyone).

Bruchac feels the publishing world is a negative region (with some exceptions). He believes that the majority of books are published for and about the middle class white male. As a publisher and promoter of prison authors, women, Asian-Americans and other neglected cultural minorities, Bruchac is counteracting this urban commercial provincialism. But he is quick to point out that those who write from the heart and who are true (dispossessed) natives, are not only members of minority groups, and that individuals with a strong sense of region, as different as Toni Morrison and William Kennedy, have achieved popular success.

Poet Linda Hogan, a Chickasaw Indian who grew up near the Texas-Oklahoma border, also feels that "we are all informed by the land we live in." In contrast to Bruchac she emphasizes that we are all global people, that if we come to know a place, we need not have been in it a long time to write about it (or to be *of* it). Her example is her feeling of closeness with the urban Indian community of Denver, far removed from the rural world she grew up in and writes about. There exists a community of Indian writers, and they are a community even though they live in geographically separate places, follow different life courses and don't write from any common Indian ideology.

Hogan is a rehabilitator of injured birds of prey. In this demanding therapeutic activity she feels she comes closer to immediate life and avoids becoming intellectually distanced from experience. She considers non-Indians who attempt to become part of Indian culture as similarly

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distanced intellectual exploiters of it, unable actually to become part of it. But she believes any good writer is inherently part of some community and thereby possesses a global sense. The earth itself is the basic region of everyone. Thus she maintains a balance between the uniqueness of Indian culture as a "region," and the participation of all humans in a more expansive regional experience.

It is notable that the two writers who define regionalism in the most encompassing terms are from the Northeast, where there is such a great diversity and intermingling of attributes such as national origin and economic status. As New Jersey novelist and poet Penelope Schott says, "People in the Northeast are convinced that they *are* the mainstream and that 'regionalism' is the term used by provincials to assert themselves in the presence of their superiors." To Schott, Northeasterners don't think in terms of regionalism because they see themselves as the standard by which other less perfect areas are to be judged.

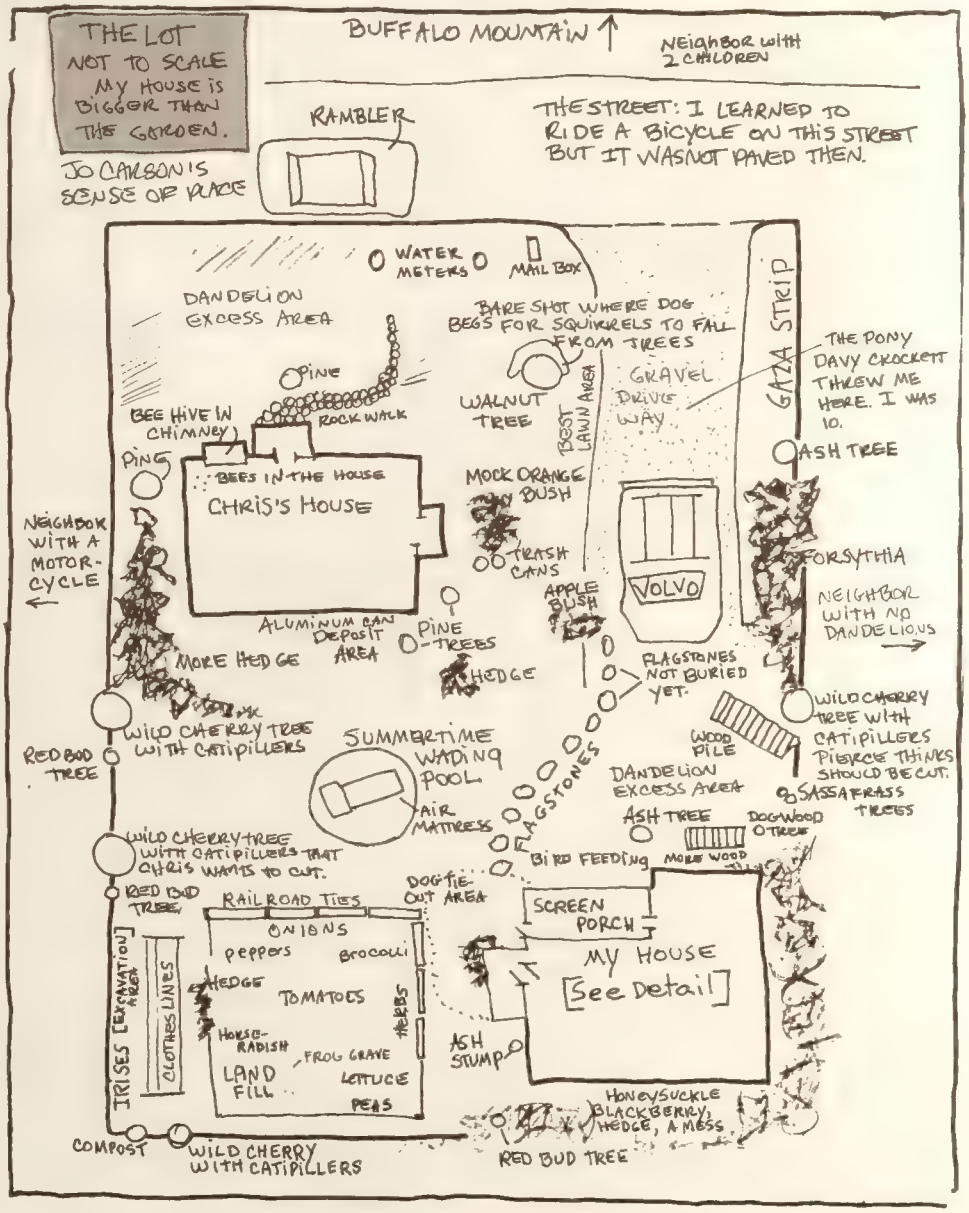
Schott's own sense of a region includes "the world of women, of family, of the complex relationships among people who love each other and mostly mean well." Her immediate region of living experience is her house and its close environs on the Delaware and Raritan canal. In fact, her own kitchen, where she writes, is the place where she can most experience immediate circumstances in a universal context. While she feels comfortable within her native region as her own body and local spaces concentric to it, she feels that most Northern urbanites don't see themselves as similarly regional, limited in their own spheres. Southerners tend to deny their own limitedness, she believes.

In a sense, Schott bases her ideas of regionalism on the implicit cultural distinctions between South and North. On the other hand, by emphasizing the extreme localization of each person's native region, she allows every individual to be a positive regionalist by virtue of his/her very bodily existence.

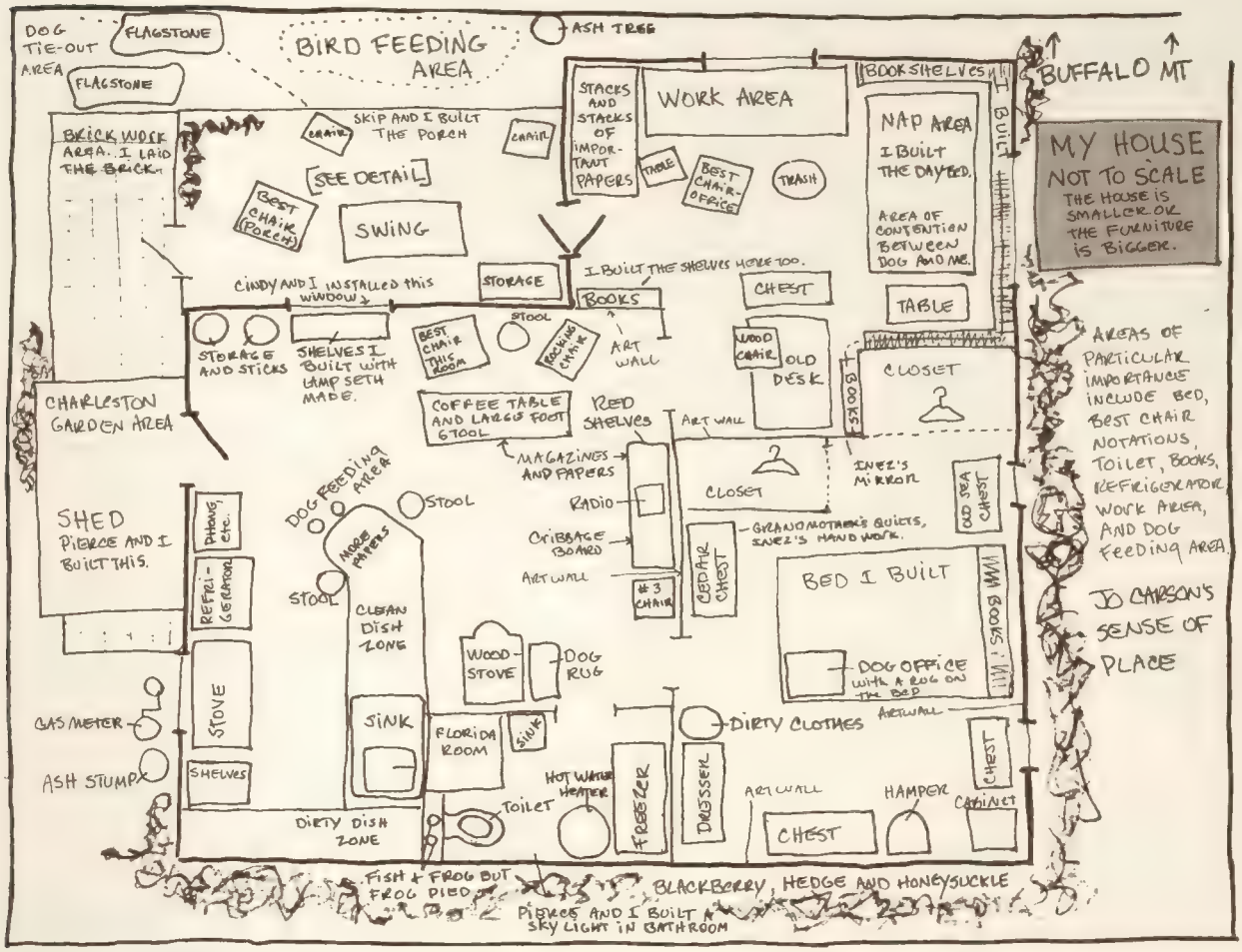
Hugh Nissenson is a New York Jewish writer, whose exhaustively detailed fictional journal of a 19th century Ohio pioneer, *The Tree of Life*, has been widely praised. In this novel, Nissenson recreates the local reality of someone extremely different from himself not only in time but in culture, faith and circumstances of life. He cites the international popularity of this geographically and temporally regional novel to support his view that despite the persistence of national literatures, we have reached a time of international culture. The way to universality embodying the shared consciousness of this culture is, however, for the artist, "not through the universal but through the specific." He explores a region of the heart or "landscape of the soul" shared with others, no matter how different they may be in their specific external circumstances. Nissenson believes that geographical regionalism is immensely beneficial to a writer: " . . . if you have the goods, sooner or later people are going to see you've got the goods, and they are going to respect your work."

In the end, the concept of regionalism defies anything more than the dynamic juxtaposition of very different approaches to it. However, the very fact of its aliveness and relevance to people of diverse regions is a sign of its significance.

Jo Carson Traces Her Routes #3



Jo Carson Traces Her Routes #4



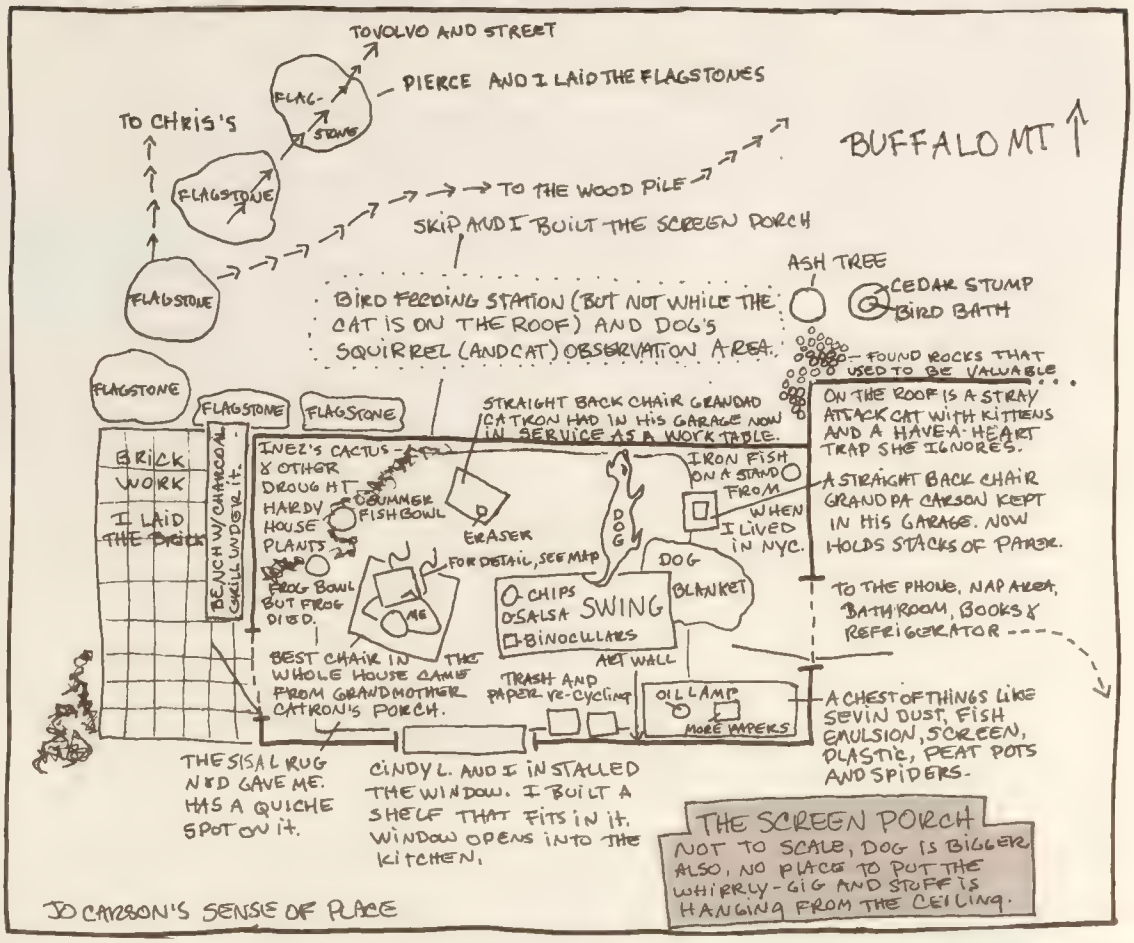
And This Is the Way To Be Poor

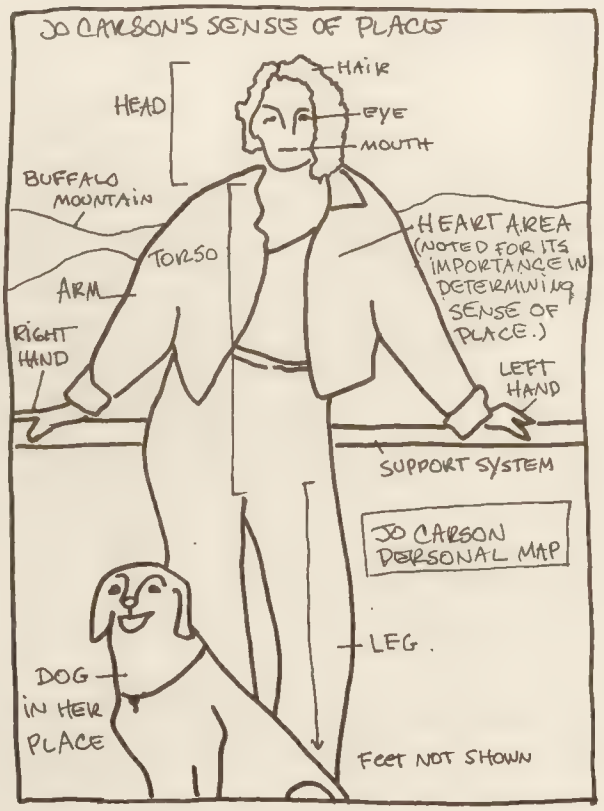
Wearing the same jeans and T-shirt
And the cheap purple earrings
Bought for a quarter at the Salvation Army
When you didn't want to touch them
But knew they would match.
Buying Big League Chew
So your kids will think candy
But won't swallow the bubble gum
And won't cry for hotdogs
For at least ten more minutes.
Buying gas in one gallon shots,
Pretending you don't want to change a twenty.
Paying the water bill after three warnings
And disconnecting the telephone again.
Using the food stamps for day-old bread
And year-old canned corn that long since lost its label.
Smelling not half as good as the woman in front of you
And wondering why the hell you came
To see teachers, the principal, who smile tight-lipped
And tell you that Georgie is doing just fine
When you know he can't read a cereal box
And nobody gives a damn.
That's poor.

—Barbara Smith

Barbara Smith's poetry and short stories have been published widely in the region. She teaches at Alderson-Broaddus College in Philippi, W.Va.

Jo Carson Traces Her Routes # 5 & 6


TO VOLVO AND STREET
PIERCE AND I LAID THE FLAGSTONES
FLAG-
STONE
TO CHRIS'S
FLAGSTONE
FLAGSTONE
TO THE WOOD PILE
BUFFALO MT
SKIP AND I BUILT THE SCREEN PORCH
ASH TREE
CEDAR STUMP BIRD BATH
BIRD FEEDING STATION (BUT NOT WHILE THE CAT IS ON THE ROOF) AND DOG'S SQUIRREL (AND CAT) OBSERVATION AREA.
FOUND ROCKS THAT USED TO BE VALUABLE
FLAGSTONE
FLAGSTONE
FLAGSTONE
STRAIGHT BACK CHAIR GRANDAD CATRON HAD IN HIS GARAGE NOW IN SERVICE AS A WORK TABLE.
ON THE ROOF IS A STRAY ATTACK CAT WITH KITTENS AND A HAVE-A-HEART TRAP SHE IGNORES.
BRICK WORK
I LAID THE BRICK
BENCH W/CHARCOAL GRILL UNDER IT.
INEZ'S CACTUS & OTHER DROUGHT HARDY HOUSE PLANTS
SUMMER FISH BOWL
FROG BOWL BUT FROG DIED.
ERASER
FOR DETAIL, SEE MAP
ME
DOG
IRON FISH ON A STAND FROM WHEN I LIVED IN NYC.
A STRAIGHT BACK CHAIR GRANDPA CARSON KEPT IN HIS GARAGE. NOW HOLDS STACKS OF PAPER.
DOG
BLANKET
CHIPS
SALSA
SWING
BINOCULARS
TO THE PHONE, NAP AREA, BATHROOM, BOOKS & REFRIGERATOR
ART WALL
BEST CHAIR IN THE WHOLE HOUSE CAME FROM GRANDMOTHER CATRON'S PORCH.
TRASH AND PAPER re-cycling
OIL LAMP
MORE PAPERS
A CHEST OF THINGS LIKE SEVIN DUST, FISH EMULSION, SCREEN, PLASTIC, PEAT POTS AND SPIDERS.
THE SISAL RUG N&D GAVE ME. HAS A QUICHE SPOT ON IT.
CINDY L. AND I INSTALLED THE WINDOW. I BUILT A SHELF THAT FITS IN IT. WINDOW OPENS INTO THE KITCHEN.
THE SCREEN PORCH
NOT TO SCALE, DOG IS BIGGER ALSO, NO PLACE TO PUT THE WHIRLY-GIG AND STUFF IS HANGING FROM THE CEILING.
JO CARSON'S SENSE OF PLACE



Polio Summers

All those summers you lived sitting
on wire-spoked wheels to negotiate
hallways and go out on the deck. Starry
nights you bested the Egyptians figuring
the apogees of the eight sister planets,
grew to make a sense how an inscrutable god,
psychic in the whole upstairs of space,
might roll a compensating grace to the lame, spin
straw into an army's bullion to fight wars.
I remember telling you bedside how a kid
crawled through melons and cukes to capture
a garter snake inside a jar, and you
asked to see it with your wonderful grey
eyes that charmed the serpent into coiling,
cooing submission. Your fortitude to ride out
winter planted in an iron lung, shockingly
beyond any physician's prognosis, bought me
time in June to understand about death.

—Edward C. Lynskey

Edward C. Lynskey's poetry has appeared in ***Hiram Poetry Review, Texas Review, University of Windsor Review, Negative Capability*** *and others. His book of poetry,* ***The Tree Surgeon's Gift,*** *is due out this year.*

Reviews

Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet

by Jo Carson

Orchard Books
New York, 1989
$12.95 (hardcover)

Greta Hedberg

Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet is not, as the title alone might suggest, a collection of tales better left untold—stories that someone kept mum about for good reason. No, these brief pieces—49 in all and set on the page with the appearance more of poems than stories—are made of words that are only waiting for a willing listener. As the speaker in the book's last story says, "When I'm dead, it will not matter how hard you press your ear to the ground." What she has to say belongs to her flesh and blood, and by implication, all these stories need to be told, and listened to, so that what they say and who says it can endure.

Though the source of the stories in Carson's book is largely "overheard conversation," and though they were written first as performance pieces, the book does not read with the flatness that oral narrative so often has when nailed to the printed page. What saves *Stories* from this fate is the fact that Carson is not trying to recount what she has heard verbatim but has instead caught the substance, the heart of each conversation, and given it back in what she terms "chosen words." If these words aren't exactly as she heard them, the sense of them is, and the character whose story it is is as surely articulated as the subject of a deft artist, who in a couple of pencil strokes can catch the line of a chin or the squint of the eyes that conclusively makes the drawing that of a particular person.

Divided into five sections, *Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet* is written almost exclusively in the first person—a series of voices summing an incident or a life. And the voices sound different: these aren't 49 stories that are theme and variations on Carson's own.

The strongest sections are those where the transaction between narrator and reader is most immediate—the opening 14 pieces of "Neighbors and Kin" and the concluding 11 in "We Say of Ourselves." In each piece, which seldom goes over a page and is arranged with the care for line and stanza breaks that is found in good poetry, we hear someone talking—about Henry's awful corn bread, splinter furniture, ailments, junk, Jim Beam and Jack Daniels—the "whiskey boys."

If this list makes the book sound like a Sears catalog of "mountain people concerns," it is anything but. People's lives come through these stories, the focus of which is not really what people think about, but *how* they think it.

In the middle three sections of the book, beginning with "Observations" and followed by "Relationships" and "Working," there is a subtle shift in tone, attributable perhaps to the change in subject matter. Whereas the first and last sections of *Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet* have a dailiness in their focus, with larger concerns present only by implication, the stories in the middle sections are *about* some of those concerns: we hear the voice of an abused wife, a black who knows that prejudice is still alive and unwell, a man fired from his job of over 20 years, a worker at a nuclear operation.

Because the focus in these pieces is much more clearly directed to making a statement which the speaker is well aware he is making and which the author must in a sense endorse to pass on, these stories seem less direct than those simply "overheard" in the initial and concluding sections. In "Neighbor and Kin" and "We Say of Ourselves," the speaker is often ignorant of how much he is revealing about human nature—his own or others. Many of the voices in the middle section are aware; the stories are told by people who *know* what they know.

Usually this self-awareness doesn't matter; there is no sense of self-consciousness. In a few cases it does make for the strained story, as in "You can always tell a tourist town," that doesn't ring as true as so many of the other pieces. But these are rare and are the more noticeable only because of the "got-it-rightness" of the majority of the stories.

When it comes to the final endorsement of a book, there is always the tendency to give reasons why someone else should read it. Not enough to say "Read it because it's good." The temptation — especially with a book that records such distinct voices—is to say, "Read it for a true picture of the people here, or more generally, of those many people from the area loosely known as the Appalachians."

But I would not be the one to say what this book is a true picture of, beyond the individuals it gives voice to. I don't know what defines a region anymore than the woman Carson mentions in her introduction who swore these were stories from East Texas, not East Tennessee. The author herself doesn't confine them to a specific part of the country—the stories *are* from East Tennessee, but they don't have to be.

I do think that you could hear the voices in *Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet* in many places, but these wouldn't be New York City or Southern California or most parts of Massachusetts or Florida. I believe you would hear them in places where people tend to stay put, often for their whole lives: where there has been poverty and hard times and the time to focus on other people, not just on things or an overgrown sense of self. Such circumstances give a certain flavor to one's outlook, and it is that outlook, so finely articulated in *Stories*, that makes it not simply a regional piece of writing but one that gives readers the feel for a people which must surely precede any knowledge of the place.

Greta Hedberg has degrees in English from the University of Michigan and East Tennessee State University. Formerly the editor of the ***National Storytelling Journal*** *in Jonesborough, Tenn., she has recently moved with her daughter to Charlottesville, Va.*

Reviews

A Southern Appalachian Reader

Edited by Nellie McNeil and Joyce Squibb

Appalachian Consortium Press
University Hall
Appalachian State University
Boone, N.C. 28608, 1988
$14.95 (paperback)

Grace Toney Edwards

A Southern Appalachian Reader will surely be greeted with applause from teachers looking for a text for their Appalachian Studies classes. Organized by a thematic schema, the book fits most readily into the English classroom, though it can easily move into history, sociology, anthropology, and even psychology.

The editors vowed to fill a void by producing a textbook on the Appalachian literary heritage especially for high school students. College students, educators and the general public can also enjoy and profit from the *Reader*.

In format, the textbook is roughly patterned after its college-level predecessor, *Voices from the Hills*. Indeed, Professor Robert J. Higgs, co-editor of *Voices*, is credited as the inspiration for the present volume. Editors McNeil and Squibb write, "When we complained about the lack of a suitable text [to teach their own classes in Appalachian literature], Dr. Higgs responded, 'Write one.' His continued encouragement carried us to publication."

Surely the editors' perception of their own high school English classes as the major audience for the text influenced their approach and their choice of selections. With an approximately equal number of pages given to each of two parts, they divide the book into "The Past" and "The Present," thereby suggesting a chronological movement. Such a movement does occur, but at least 75 percent of the writing comes from contemporary authors, who at times "cast a backward glance" at what has gone before. The heavy dose of contemporary authors speaks for the literary renaissance flourishing in the Highlands over the past three decades and making an anthology like this possible.

Because the book's eight chapters treat specific topics, I have dubbed its organization thematic. However, the first two chapters actually present literary movements: "Oral Tradition" and "Local Color and Realistic Tradition." Chapter three shifts to a topical emphasis: "Contemporary Authors Search for a Usable Past"; and the next five chapters follow suit. The middle chapters take on a hint of political crusade as they describe "How America Came to the Mountains," "Moving Mountains: The Struggle of the Coal Industry," and "The Change Hits Home." The final two chapters demonstrate the push and pull of "Appalachian Emigration" and "The Sense of Place in Appalachian Writing." All of the chapters offer lively, sometimes wrenching treatments of compelling subjects, despite the mixture of literary movements and thematic topics.

Within each chapter the editors intermingle literary genres to illustrate the topic under review. For example, chapter three contains three short stories, seven poems, a novel excerpt and a magazine article. Other genres in other chapters include ballad, folksong, folktale, essay and drama excerpt. No attempt is made to define or characterize the literary genres by form; rather each is given as a thematic revelation about the topic. In the English classroom such an omission might be perceived as a shortcoming; however, in cross-disciplinary Appalachian Studies classes, attention to literary form would be distracting.

The editors have taken care to sound many dominant Appalachian voices, among them Cratis Williams, Jim Wayne Miller, Fred Chappell, Wilma Dykeman, James Still, Jesse Stuart and Lee Smith. I am pleased to see Ron Short here, and George Ella Lyon, Jo Carson, Ed Cabbell, Gurney Norman, Marilou Awiakta and Rita Quillen. New author Judy Odom delights me with her story "The Killing Jar," so appropriately placed alongside those already mentioned. But in the midst of this harmonious chorus, a few voices are strangely silent: Where is Harriette Arnow, who speaks so passionately for the Appalachian emigrant, and whose work is touted in the headnote of that chapter? Where is Jack Higgs, who mentored this volume and who is himself an eloquent spokesman for Appalachian writing? Where is Loyal Jones, whose essays, poetry, stories, jokes and ballads, permeate the region? Where is Denise Giardina, whose novel *Storming Heaven* signals a powerful new voice in Appalachian literature?

Finally, the teaching apparatus requires comment. The editors have written brief introductions to each chapter, headnotes about each author or piece, discussion questions about each piece, composition topics and activities at the end of each chapter. The inclusion of all these items is desirable for a teaching text. From a teacher's perspective, however, I would prefer *more* detail in the introductions. When a writer appears in different sections of the book, I suggest cross referencing to the other sections, rather than repetition of the same material. I find the follow-up questions to each selection thought-provoking but certainly not exhaustive. From an English teacher's view, the composition topics and activities at the end of each chapter are excellent, and they appear to be easily adaptable to other disciplinary needs as well. I especially applaud the assignment of a family scrapbook, begun in the first activity section of chapter one and continued throughout the book to culminate with the student's own story at the end of chapter eight. Surely the student writer will close her own book feeling proud of her accomplishment, just as I close *A Southern Appalachian Reader* feeling proud of my region.

Grace Toney Edwards chairs the Appalachian Studies Program and teaches in the English Department at Radford University in Radford, Va. Her work often takes her into the public schools where she offers courses in regional studies for teachers.

Reviews

Foxfire Reconsidered: A Twenty-Year Experiment in Progressive Education

by John L. Puckett

University of Illinois Press
Urbana and Chicago, 1989
$29.95 (hardcover)

Richard Blaustein

John L. Puckett's probing and occasionally unflattering portrait of the *Foxfire* project deserves the careful scrutiny of anyone concerned with Appalachian Studies, creative approaches to pedagogy or modern cultural history. Major themes of the Appalachian Studies movement are subjected to critical re-examination. These include the reversal of stigmatizing imagery of Southern mountain people, attachment to family, friends and homeplace, celebration of self-sufficiency and rediscovery of personal authenticity through return to a supposedly wholesome and natural lifestyle.

Over a five year period, Puckett conducted extensive interviews with the creator of *Foxfire,* Eliot Wigginton, with Wigginton's students, colleagues and administrators, and with residents of Rabun County in North Georgia. He also critiqued the limited scholarly literature dealing with *Foxfire* and the many regional cultural journalism projects it has inspired. He explored the philosophical assumptions of Wigginton's pedagogy, which was strongly grounded in the thought of John Dewey and of Appalachian Studies.

As Wigginton explains in his autobiographical work *Sometimes A Shining Moment,* his original intent in developing a magazine documenting local traditions was to give the bored and alienated students in his high school English course an opportunity to do something real, something personally meaningful. He could not predict that the compilation of his student collecting projects would result in one of the great commercial publishing successes in recent history. The royalties garnered from the sale of 5.7 million *Foxfire* books have provided the means to pursue a variety of progressive social and educational experiments.

Why were the *Foxfire* books so popular? What needs were they filling for their readers? During the same period that spawned *The Whole Earth Catalog, Mother Earth News* and Alex Haley's *Roots*, the *Foxfire* books helped to satiate the yearning of the rootless for roots, of the transient for traditions. Perhaps this was nothing more than a latter-day expression of pastoral romanticism. If so, maybe we need to cultivate greater understanding and appreciation of the role of romanticism in modern social and cultural life, particularly as manifested in the impulse to preserve and revive folk traditions in response to the expansion of applied science, industry, urbanization and bureaucracy.

Foxfire, however, must be considered more than a manifestation of modern pastoral romanticism. It is also an attempt to change the perceptions of students and their communities in positive ways. Ideally this empowers them to gain some degree of control over their own lives and destinies (though not necessarily by rejecting modernity and returning to preindustrial subsistence). This, too, was part of the human-scale, decentralized alternative community concept that blossomed in the late 60s and early 70s. By the mid-80s, however, it had become evident that the idealistic efforts of *Foxfire* to build local businesses run by former students had negligible impact on the course of economic growth in the Rabun County area, which still continued to witness an influx of summer people and real estate developers.

Not all of Wigginton's educational experiments have been successful either. Only a few of the cultural journalism projects inspired by *Foxfire* have survived more than 10 years. Even fewer have managed to attract the attention of commercial publishing houses. But Puckett freely acknowledges that Wigginton's accomplishments are of genuine value and significance. We also must recognize that the *Foxfire* philosophy and method of education is still evolving. The notion of providing students with experiences that draw upon local history and culture to enhance self-esteem and basic educational competencies is still winning advocates and supporters.

Though the project was harshly criticized by some professional folklorists at its inception, those of us who have been pushing for the integration of folklore into elementary and secondary school curricula have been encouraged by Wigginton's efforts. Various states have implemented folklore and folk arts in the schools programs. Mention should also be made of the emergence in the past two years of the Appalachian Youth Conference held in conjunction with the Appalachian Studies Conference. This program brings together teachers and students from the region who study and interpret traditional culture and contemporary creative writing with an Appalachian focus.

Puckett may be correct in stating that *Foxfire's* reputation exceeds its actual educational impact, but the final chapter of this exciting history remains to be written. Read in conjunction with Wigginton's *Sometimes A Shining Moment, Foxfire Reconsidered* should provide a stimulating basis for discussion in courses dealing with the anthropology of education, applied folklore or Appalachian Studies. Enthusiastically recommended.

Folklorist Richard Blaustein directs the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University. He reviewed Eliot Wigginton's autobiography, ***Sometimes a Shining Moment****, for our "Childhood in Appalachia" issue.*

Reviews

Folks II

A Collection of People Stories from Southern West Virginia and Southwest Virginia

by Garret Mathews

360 Shamrock Court, Evansville,
Ind. 47715, 1989
$6.00 (paperback)
(plus $1.00 postage)

Jacqueline Cook

Garret Mathews *Folks II* deserves a better dress, a more attractive cover and format. It should be larger, looser, more generous, like the generous author and his wife Mary Anne Stevens who shared the life and work of the people they have interviewed for the *Bluefield Telegraph,* and then compiled into this book. Were I picking through books to read, I might well pass it by, giving it a cursory glance. And had I done that I would have missed a most pleasurable experience of Appalachian-related stories and photographs.

The many brief stories show the wealth of variety in the people of West Virginia and Southwest Virginia. Those of us who already know that variety can find the added pleasure of having what we know shown to us again. Those who think a "hillbilly" is a hillbilly is a hillbilly may enjoy finding out differently.

Mathews combines terse newspaper writing style with dialogue in a way that is like sitting right beside him and the people he is talking with. For those of us who remember older times and knew people like this, there is pleasure in being reminded of where we have come from and where we are. For those who do not know such people and places, there will be a pleasure in discovery.

The photographs bring the people of the stories very close. They are psychological portraits, showing entire lives. I missed seeing one of the subjects, Mrs. Sam White, for example, until I read the credits and looked again on the cover. There she was, behind the screen door, and I thought, "Of course that's where she would be."

I smiled as I read, or felt my throat tighten. And I felt some pride. Sometimes I feel foolish, being so proud of being "Appalachian." *Folks II* reminds me that it's OK to be as proud as I am. All our stories, our joys and our sorrows share a commonality: our work, our families, our extended families and friendships in community and church.

The subjects of the stories include a coach who is also a bus driver; a peace-loving coal trucker who trades a union job for a non-union one; a husband who dies in the mines and a wife who gives birth; trading liquor and guns for the Lord; a 12-year-old preacher and a blind farmer; a special education student who plays varsity basketball; rural Mennonite families; mail-order courtship; a baby who lives and one who dies; a man who breaks horses for a living; religious scenes painted on the walls of a boiler-room; a lawyer who could make a living in home restoration. And there are people who go away and try other places and other ways of living and come back again; people who never leave; people who come from other places and stay: Mathews' stories show some of us why we are still here, and allow others to understand that better.

Folks II reminds us that we are a people who are proud of who we are, although mostly we don't even think about that, we just go on living.

I have a resistance to "folks" from "outside" who say "folks," but like the first volume, *Folks, Folks II* is another perfect title. Reading the introduction about other people Mathews has written of and reading the updating of the first *Folks*, I anticipate *Folks III* and even *Folks IV*. Perhaps Mary Anne Stevens will co-author the next one.

Jacqueline Cook teaches public administration courses with a focus on citizen participation in policy making at West Virginia University in Morgantown. She grew up in the places that Garret Mathews is writing about in ***Folks II.***

With Fiddle and Well-Rosined Bow: Old-Time Fiddling in Alabama

by Joyce H. Cauthen

University of Alabama Press
P.O. Box 870380
Tuscaloosa, Ala. 35487
$28.95 (hardcover)
and

Possum up a Gum Stump: Home, Field and Commercial Recordings of Alabama Fiddlers, Past and Present

(Alabama Traditions 103)
Brierfield Ironworks
Park Foundation
Route 1, Box 147
Brierfield, Ala. 35035
$9.50 (includes
postage & handling)

Tim Stafford

Alabama fiddling has long been appreciated by traditional instrumental music scholars but not by less specialized listeners. Until Joyce Cauthen came along, there was no complete examination of this tradition. Taken together, her excellent book and project album, *Possum up a Gum Stump,* not only fill the gap of scholarship on Alabama fiddling, but they also erect a new benchmark for fiddling scholarship in general.

The book and the album do indeed complement one another, and I strongly suggest that both be purchased to get a complete picture of Alabama fiddling. It certainly helps to *hear* some of major players in a treatise about music, such as the "brag" fiddlers like Dix Hollis, Joe

Lee, Tom Freeman, and Y.Z. Hamilton who Cauthen describes in a chapter of her book and who appear on side one of *Possum*. The marvelous booklet which accompanies the album shouldn't be considered a substitute for *With Fiddle and Well-Rosined Bow*, although it attempts to encapsulate much of the same material.

Cauthen opens the book by looking at the place of the fiddle in Alabama history, beginning with the settlement of the Alabama territory in the early 19th century and progressing through the enormous influence of the black fiddler. Black fiddlers were directly influential in some cases such as that of Dix Hollis, the first Alabama fiddler to make commercial recordings. He was taught by one of his father's former slaves. Through minstrel shows, the influence of black fiddling extended into parts of Alabama where slavery was not entrenched and into the repertoires of all white fiddlers. Cauthen considers minstrels and soldiers "early broadcasters" of the Alabama fiddling tradition.

The "electronic broadcasters" of this tradition, those who utilized the new technology of the phonograph and later the radio, had perhaps just as much influence. From the 1930s onward, these developments helped popularize old-time fiddling through its boom years, including the Great Depression and helped preserve it through its hard times, including the 1950s and the onslaught of Elvis and Rock 'n' Roll.

Luckily, *With Fiddle and Well-Rosined Bow* is not just a chronological history of Alabama fiddling. Cauthen is able to contrast the informal traditions of past "modest masters," including building instruments and repertoires, with those of the "brag" fiddlers who became "sources of community pride" in the 1920s and 1930s. The effect is a marvelous unlayering of the structure of one kind of popular music and its spheres of musicianship. You get a sense throughout this book that the author realizes that although commercial and popular artists are very important, it is the huge "third estate" of backporch musicians, who buy records and instruments to amuse themselves and their neighbors, that really keep the music alive.

Cauthen also examines the institutions that helped keep old-time fiddling alive in Alabama. From the earliest years, the fiddler was called to practice his art for informal community functions, formal celebrations and dances. But even after other entertainment displaced the fiddler in these and other arenas, fiddler's conventions remained popular in the state. The revival of the convention tradition in the late 1960s brought changes, such as the broadening and formalization of competition and the consequent adoption of impressive "contest" style fiddling. But Cauthen concludes that fiddlers' conventions "still play a crucial role in the perpetuation of old-time music."

With Fiddle and Well-Rosined Bow concludes with a look at the fiddler's literally bedeviled image. Cauthen asserts that this unfortunate stereotype of the fiddler as a drunken reveler in league with Hell still exists in some places, as do disparaging views of dancing, largely because of the Bible Belt's religious and social constraints.

Cauthen's extensive use of newspapers might frighten historians who check out footnotes before texts, but daily and weekly papers such as the *Clarke County Democrat* and the *Sand Mountain Banner* probably do provide the most reliable insights into the community musical traditions of rural areas, especially for eras which lay beyond the reach of living memory. As it is, in chapters which document more contemporary fiddling traditions, Cauthen relies heavily on the nearly 60 interviews she conducted between 1982 and 1986.

The past and present traditions of Alabama fiddling are also eloquently captured by the documentary album *Possum up a Gum Stump*. Side one of the album features home and commercial recordings of the "brag" fiddlers of an earlier generation. The excellent performances here remind us again that Alabama produced some of the best unheralded old-time fiddlers in the nation. Perhaps most representative of this tradition was Joe Lee, who was a major influence on fiddlers as famous as Clayton McMichen and Lowe Stokes. Lee displays a powerful, improvisatory style on the home disc recording of "Georgia Wagoner" and also clearly demonstrates that his variation was the source for the Skillet Lickers' version of this tune.

Field recordings of contemporary Alabama old-time fiddlers playing less familiar tunes take up side two. Many of these players are older musicians who remember the legendary fiddlers like Charlie Stripling, Y.Z. Hamilton and E.D. "Monkey" Brown, but most, like Leonard Keith, Howard Hamil and Ralph Whited, are representative of the informal tradition which is really the spirit of old-time fiddling in this southern state.

Alabama is too often left out of Appalachian studies. There is a great deal of topographic and ethnic diversity in the state, as Cauthen points out. Like Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, Georgia, and a half dozen other states that encompass both mountainous and level areas, Alabama sometimes has trouble resolving its identity crisis. In any event, there is surely a strong Appalachian influence in the northern part of the state, and many of the same forces which operate in the heart of Appalachia are actively shaping several communities in the "Deep South."

One of these factors is the continuation, revival and reinvention of traditions such as old-time fiddling. Until a comprehensive overview of old-time fiddling in the United States comes along, Joyce Cauthen's work in Alabama will remain the standard by which all other studies on this subject are judged. Highly recommended.

Tim Stafford is a research associate for the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services and a member of the bluegrass band, Dusty Miller.

Reviews

All Night Dog
by Garry Barker
Kentucke Imprints
Berea, Ky., 1988
$7.95 (paperback)

Gary Carden

The majority of the selections in this, Garry Barker's third book, have an unabashed subjectivity. In fact, many of the short stories contain narrative portraits of uncles, aunts, mules and dogs. The experience is not unlike looking at the family photograph album. Here is a faded snapshot of "Duck," the mixed-breed dog who lived a life of epic adventure until he was shot by a heedless child with a new .22. Here is Sam Wilson with Bess, the dependable but eccentric mule. Together, they plowed a Mauck Ridge farm for over 20 years. Oh, and look at that! Vernon and the Blue Goose! That is what he called that car he bought just before he went off to college. And here is Aunt Elsie, the gentle, soft-spoken aunt, and "Bill Tom," that pony she loved to ride.

However, the fact that these nostalgic tributes are largely autobiographical does not limit their appeal. All of us who were born in Appalachia and acknowledge a debt to the people, places and things that sustained and encouraged us, will find a common bond with Barker's heritage. Indeed, there is much here that transcends regionalism. Although the setting may be a rural mountain farm, a dingy laundromat or a Greyhound bus running from Asheville, N.C., to Lexington, Ky., Barker's characters represent universal verities: humanity's search for purpose and meaning, and the need to give and receive love.

In this reviewer's opinion, the author is sometimes guilty of excessive sentiment. His need to pay homage to the past and to the people he reveres sometimes produces a selective nostalgia, a tendency to show loved ones at their best. The aunts seem too gentle, the uncles too stoic and the parents too supportive. Like those tinted pictures in old albums, the vivid colors sometimes mask blemishes; reality vanishes beneath a veneer of emotion. However, in evaluating the total collection, this is a minor flaw. In all likelihood, readers will find that each story evokes personal memories of beloved pets, self-sacrificing relatives and childhood sweethearts.

Barker is especially effective in capturing the taste, smell and feel of places that shape our lives— the setting for our rites of passage— the places where we learn our greatest (and often painful) truths. For example, "Five Corners" and "WFO" (the two most unsentimental pieces in the collection) have a gritty "hands on" experience. The reader feels that Barker has felt the chill that comes from riding a motorcycle in a cold rain and that he is no stranger to the gathering places of the rootless and disillusioned: back-roads beer joints, service stations and "convenience stores." We are fortunate in that he has been able to draw on these experiences in creating these stories.

Storyteller and writer Gary Carden teaches at Brevard College in Brevard, N.C. His essay "Inside, Looking Out" appeared in the "Insiders/Outsiders" issue of ***Now and Then.***

SOME WRITING with a sense of place

Appalachian publishing seems to be alive and well considering the number of interesting items that have come into our office lately. Here are some good ones:

SENSE OF PLACE IN APPALACHIA is the 1988 publication of papers presented at a symposium held at Morehead State University in 1987, edited by S. Mont Whitson, Professor of Sociology at Morehead. A distinguished group has contributed to this 329-page volume, including Ron Eller, director of the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky; Loyal Jones, Director of the Appalachian Center at Berea College; John Stephenson, President of Berea College; Jim Wayne Miller, Professor of Modern Languages at Western Kentucky University and many others. The collection includes sections on history, literature, religion, art and music, sociology and psychology, geography, community and media. Any scholar interested in studying the region should have this book. $12.00 (paperback) from University Bookstore, Morehead State University, Morehead, KY 40351.

From the article "Inside Appalachia: Familiar Land and Ordinary People" by Stuart S. Sprague, Morehead State University:

In the wake of the War Between the States, two groups of flatlanders took an interest in Appalachia. Protestants, bloodied in the fight for city souls due to waves of new Catholic, Jewish and Greek Orthodox immigrants, most of whom did not speak their language, found in Appalachia an "unchurched" (in the ways of their sect) population with whom their sectarian missionaries were more comfortable. Local color writers found that editors considered Appalachia an 'exotic' region and churned out streams of superficial travel sketches gussied up in double distilled Elizabethanisms. The two groups gave Appalachia a high profile and by transmuting the atypical into the norm, stereotyped the region. This was not Rip Van Winkledom, but Brigadoon.

From "Sense of Place Among Black Appalachians" by William Turner, Winston-Salem (N.C.) State University:

The vast majority of Harlan County, Ky., Blacks who came to the region in the last decade of the 19th century, including those Blacks born in the region between 1900-1930, remember with clarity and fondness the halcyon days of the coal boom up to the fourth and fifth decades of this century. One interviewing them cannot miss their sentimental attachment to Appalachia as a 'place'—their only place. For blacks of my

Reviews

generation—those born after 1940—Appalachia was and remains a temporary way station to some other future...a future 'out there' in real (Black) America/the World, where, at least, the paradox is the twoness (being Black...being American), rather than the threeness of being Black, and American and Appalachian!

PINE MOUNTAIN SAND AND GRAVEL is a periodical of contemporary Appalachian writing edited by Gurney Norman, Bob Henry Baber and Richard Hague. This is another edition (1988—though it actually appeared in 1989) of writing and thinking that comes about as close to new wave as Appalachia gets. This issue contains a stimulating conversation between Gurney Norman and Lance Olsen, "Frankenstein in Palestine, or: Postmodernism in Appalachia." You don't want to miss it. There are also poems by Rita Quillen, Mike Henson, Jim Wayne Miller, Bob Snyder, Jim Webb, Baber, Hague and others. $7.00 to HC 84 Box 436, Whitesburg, KY 41858.

Lance Olsen, from his conversation with Gurney Norman in *Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel:*

Postmodernism aims to subvert any overarching story that helps shape and define a given culture's life, whether that story happens to concern itself with reason, Christianity, the romantic ideal, or whatever. Postmodernism is naturally antagonistic to the idea of a center, a stabilizing locus, in any thought or belief. As a result, as soon as we apply postmodern ideas to Appalachian literature we will have begun to question in a wholly new way some of the fundamental assumptions that such a culture and such a literature make about themselves, about experience, language, and art. It seems to me that ultimately such a maneuver is going to be very healthy indeed, if by healthy we mean revitalizing, reenergizing, reinvigorating...

THE BLUE VALLEY is a collection of stories by poet Robert Morgan, 1989. These are 14 finely-written tales of the North Carolina Blue Ridge Mountains from Civil War days to the present. Robert Morgan grew up on a small farm in the North Carolina mountains and is now a professor of English at Cornell University. $15.95 (hardcover) from Peachtree Publishers, Ltd., 494 Armour Circle, N.E., Atlanta, GA 30324.

From the story "Blinding Daylight":

He was trying to find his mother's pistol. It was a little .22 caliber revolver which she had kept under some clothes in the chest of drawers. She had always urged him to carry it when he went into the woods. 'You might see a snake,' she would say, 'There's been rattlers all over the mountain.' Or, 'There's been reports of wild dogs out, you better carry this.' And later, when he returned home from his first teaching job: 'There's hippies in the mountains now, crazy with drugs and liable to do anything. I'd not go back there unless I was armed.'

THE WISDOM OF FOLK METAPHOR, *THE BRIER CONDUCTS A LABORATORY EXPERIMENT,* is a long poem by Jim Wayne Miller, 1988. $3.00 to Seven Buffaloes Press, P.O. Box 249, Big Timber, MT 59011. It rhymes!

The crux of his experiment was this:
he proposed to endeavor to impart
to a stump, some fence posts, and a barn
the same material his sophomores were to learn,
then, at the end of the instructional term,
to test both groups, make his inferences,
publish, and await the consequences

THE SOW'S EAR is a new poetry quarterly edited by Errol Hess, Larry Richman and Graphics editor Mary Calhoun. "We are not going to be quilt-and-corn-shucks regional, but rather regional in that broader sense which allows for quilts and futons, corn shucks and verbal cornucopias," says Richman in an editor's note. Contributors include Suzanne Clark, Julia Nunnally Duncan, J.B. Goodenough, Nell McGrady, Jim Wayne Miller, Judy K. Miller, Felicia Mitchell, Rita Quillen, Susan Roper and others. $3.00 per issue, $8.00 per year, 245 McDowell Street, Bristol, TN 37620.

From Fries and a Coke by Jack Coulehan:

You're just a kid from the Hill
with sickle cells

popping and shooting. Shooting
you dead. And so

you ask for fries and a coke
and you punch the pillow.

VENUE is "A New Literary Endeavor," publishing "Contemporary American Literature" from the Appalachian Literary League in Charleston, W.Va., 1988. This is the first of what Associate Editor Michael Joseph Pauley says "is intended to be periodical by nature." It's an earnest effort focusing on the Appalachian region. The other associate editors for this issue are Joseph Barrett and Joanie Barrett. The editorial board, whose members have also contributed poetry, are Colleen Anderson, Bob Henry Baber, Joseph and Joanie Barrett, Joe Ferrell, Terrance Hill, Kirk Judd, Pat Love, Emil Kathryn Pauley, Michael Joseph Pauley and Bob Snyder. And there are poems by Gary Snyder and Allen Ginsberg. For copies, write to 4651 Victoria Road, Big Tyler Mountain, Charleston, WV 25313.

From Hecaterion to a Hygienist by Bob Snyder:

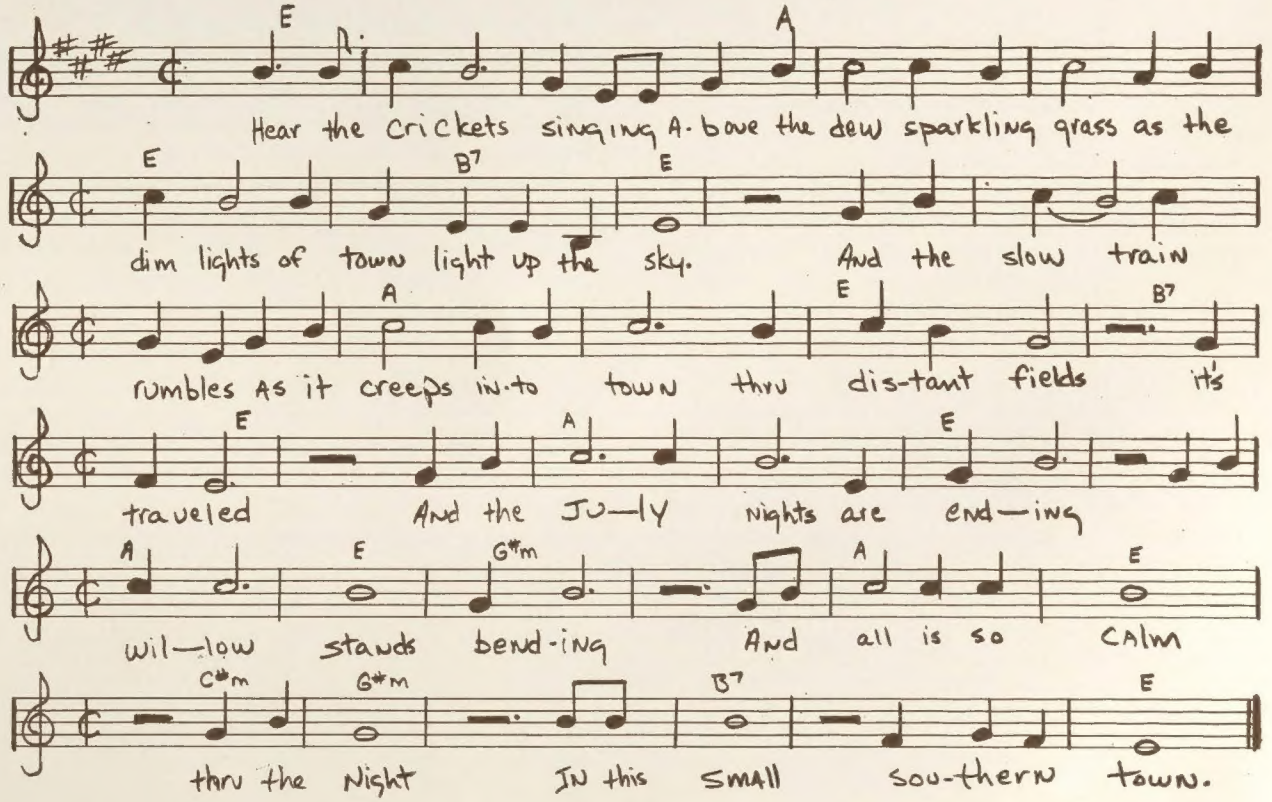
Sometimes, I dream of driving to Marietta,
straight to the office where you worked,
and you buff each tooth plumb sparkling,
buzz my gums goodnaturedly once or twice,
give my big novocaine nose a pert shove:
your hands taste cinnamon and alcohol,
medical bitters and country clay,
all the mystical salts and crystals, naked of any wedding ring
and without whatever would be the taste of death.

—Pat Arnow

Small Southern Town

Ed Snodderly

Hope this song expresses a sense of place for you. Slow days, calm nights, empty main streets, the sound of a voice in a far off field, all seem to bring together thoughts for a song like this. This song gets requested a lot when the Brother Boys play.



Hear the crickets singing
Above the dew sparkling grass
As the dim lights of town
Light up the sky.
And a slow train rumbles
As it creeps into town
Through distant fields it's traveled.

Chorus:

And the July nights are ending
And the willow stands bending
And all is so calm through the night
In this small Southern town.

Smell the alfalfa hay
That was cut yesterday
Tomorrow will be the right time for baling
And as the small town sleeps
Hope the bright stars keep
For the hot sun will surely be shining.

The Brother Boys, Ed Snodderly and Eugene Wolf, have recently played in Nashville at the Station Inn and at the Ernest Tubb Record Shop Midnight Jamboree (which is broadcast live on WSM radio). They have also played regularly at the Down Home in Johnson City. Small Southern Town appears on The Brother Boys Album (New Hillbilly Records, Box 5326 EKS, Johnson City, Tenn. 37603). Ed Snodderly, 1989. Drivin Round Music, BMI.

If you are a songwriter we'd very much like to review your songs for future publication. Upcoming themes include Art: Folk and Fine (for which the subject matter is open), Rural Appalachia and Urban Appalachia. Please provide a copy of the lyric sheet and the song recorded on a cassette. Send them to Ed Snodderly, Music Editor at *Now and Then*, Box 19180A, Johnson City, Tenn. 37614-0002. If you provide a self-addressed stamped envelope your work will be returned. While we copyright each issue of the magazine, all rights remain with the songwriter.

Alice Anthony

Direction

Not too interested in Frost's diverging roads
nor in where I'm going,
I'm looking back on the road I've been walking.

In an old picture album, I passed the log
house my great-grandfather built
when he first crossed over into Virginia.

Listening to my father talk about Preacher
Pendergrass, I stopped by the church
of Baptist-Presbyterian feuding.

On a Sunday afternoon drive with a friend
I took the school bus route, winding
down Gysper Creek to the Holston River.

I am doubling back to look at where I am.

—Gretchen McCroskey

Gretchen McCroskey's poems have appeared in ***Mountain Ways, The New River Free Press, Wind, Artemis, Appalachian Heritage*** *and* ***Now and Then.***

NOW AND THEN

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